METRO / A17

Abra Gov. Vicente Valera just a friend, model linked to official tells NBI

ACROSS / A13

Surigao police chief sacked for failing to solve leftist killing

METRO / A17

Several roads closed in Manila today for Black Nazarene procession

NEWS / A2

Police arrest suspect in Valentine's Day bus bombing in Makati

Polish archbishop quits over secret police ties

WARSAW, POLAND—WARSAW'S NEW ARCHbishop has resigned following revelations that he had ties with Poland's communist-era secret police, stunning worshippers by sadly yielding the archbishop's throne just minutes before he was to be installed.

To cries of "No, No!" and "Stay with us!" inside and outside the capital's St. John's Cathedral on Sunday, a despondent Stanislaw Wielgus

POLISH/ A8

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Tuesday, January 9, 2007 ★★★ 5 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 32 P18 website: inquirer.net

Nothing but the truth with Net lie detector

NETANYA, ISRAEL—Have you ever wondered if someone you are chatting with is telling you the truth? New lie detector software from high-tech powerhouse Israel says it can show you how—

NOTHING BUT/ A4

PEREZ: End of money trail?

Ex-DOJ chief Perez faces extortion raps

Finally, Ombudsman acts on $2-M bribe complaint

By DJ Yap

THE OFFICE OF THE Ombudsman is set to press graft and extortion charges against former Justice Secretary Hernando Perez in connection with the $2-million bribery complaint lodged against him by former Manila Rep. Mark Jimenez.

Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez, who was a justice undersecretary under Perez, recommended the filing of charges against her former boss after a panel of prosecutors found probable cause to indict Perez.

Joining Perez as respondents in the complaint for graft, extortion and falsification of public documents are his wife Rosario, brother-in-law Ramon Arceo and business associate Ernest Escaler.

Arceo is a former director of United Coconut Planters' Bank and executive vice president of PCIBank, while Escaler is a former consultant of Hong Kong's Coutts Bank for the Philippines.

Gutierrez said the case would be filed with the Sandiganbayan within five days.

In a 66-page resolution, graft prosecutors said there was sufficient evidence to establish that Perez and company had committed "illegal acts," based on bank documents presented by Jimenez before the body.

The documents included the $2-million deposit that Jimenez had wired to Escaler's account in

EX-DOJ/ A7

NIGHT SKY SPECTACLE
Thousands of people watch Sunday night's fireworks display by Britain during the Pyro Olympics on Manila Bay. Nine countries are taking part in the yearly competition. AP

'Nicole' asks SC: Declare VFA illegal

By Armand N. Nocum and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE LAWYER OF RAPE VICtim "Nicole" has asked the Supreme Court to declare as unconstitutional a provision in the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) and the controversial transfer of US Marine Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith to the custody of the US Embassy.

In a petition, lawyer Evalyn G. Ursua said she wanted to register "how public respondents shamelessly surrendered our nation's sovereignty and dignity by entering into the questioned agreements and by turning over Smith to the US Embassy."

Makati Judge Benjamin Pozon convicted Smith on Dec. 4 of raping Nicole and ordered the Marine detained at the Makati City Jail.

Named respondents in the petition for certiorari were Smith, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno and Presidential Legal Counsel Sergio Apostol.

"Unless the court declares the transfer unconstitutional and illegal, the general public will lose faith in the independence, integrity and competence of our courts. Worse, it may lead the public to lose faith altogether in the rule of law," Ursua said.

She said the Cabinet officials "committed grave abuse of discretion" in entering into an agreement last Dec. 22 with US Ambassador Kristie · Kenney. The agreement was subsequently used as the basis for the transfer of Smith to the US Embassy.

The agreement, Ursua said, was invalid in "effecting the release of Daniel Smith without court authority and in turning him over to the US Embassy."

Through her lawyer, Nicole

NICOLE/ A4

A PROTESTER burns a poster of US President George W. Bush during a rally near the US Embassy. AP

Favored suppliers bag AFP deals

SPECIAL REPORT

By Yvonne Chua and Luz Rimban
Contributors

(Second of three parts)

AS HE PREPARED TO LEAVE THE Department of National Defense last November, then Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz asked concerned citizens to closely guard the P10-billion fund that will be released for the Armed Forces of the Philippines' latest modernization plan called the Capability Upgrade Program.

To be sure, reforms designed to safeguard AFP funds are already being put in place. There is the 10-point Philippine Defense Reform Program meant to improve DND and AFP operations and manpower. A defense acquisition committee and internal audit offices have been established. Representatives of the private sector, such as the Makati Business Club and the Bishops-Businessmen's Conference, have been allowed to observe bidding procedures. Measures to streamline procurement procedures throughout the AFP are being implemented.

Despite these reforms, government auditors and defense and budget officials worry that a culture of inefficiency and corruption continues to plague the AFP. A string of problematic transactions illustrates why they say reforms in the AFP are going to be an uphill battle:

- In 2003, the government authorized the AFP to purchase 12,000 units of handheld very high frequency radios worth

FAVORED / A6

RP assures Asian allies of vigilance

By Christine O. Avendaño

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARroyo yesterday assured visiting Asian leaders of her country's vigilance against security threats, citing Saturday's military operation that killed six militants, one of whom belonged to the al-Qaida-linked Jemayah Islamiyah.

The President, who flew to Jolo yesterday to commend the Armed Forces of the Philippines for the successful operation against the Abu Sayyaf and the JI, said the encounter "only proves that these terrorist elements have nowhere to hide and are, in fact, already doomed to annihilation."

She issued the statement as delegations to the 12th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), as well as the group's East Asian dialogue partners began arriving for the five-day event beginning Wednesday in Cebu City. *(See story at left.)*

RP ASSURES/ A8

No-fly zone declared over Asean summit venues

By Jhunnex Napallacan
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—THE ARMED Forces Central Command (Centcom) has declared a 32-kilometer no-fly zone over the venues of the regional Asian summit and a 70-km space restriction zone from the Mactan Benito Ebuen Air Base in Lapulapu City.

Centcom spokesperson Lt. Col. Jefferson Omandam said the declaration would be enforced during the Jan. 10-15 meetings of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and its dialogue partners.

Omandam said the no-fly zone would cover the airport area and the different venues of the summit, such as Shangri-La's Mactan Island Resort in Lapulapu City, Cebu International Convention Center (CICC) in Mandaue City, Waterfront Cebu City Hotel and Casino, and Marco Polo Plaza Cebu in Cebu City.

Regular air traffic at the airports will not be affected but commercial and private planes will have to follow all instructions upon entering the air space restricted zone.

In case an aircraft has radio problems and cannot respond to instructions, the task group will immediately send up aircraft to escort the plane.

The air space restriction zone will allow the military to detect any unauthorized aircraft and provide ground personnel time to react to intrusions.

Omandam said the Philippine Air Force will intercept any aircraft entering or already within the restricted zone that cannot be identified as "friendly."

While Philippine officials have declared that it was all systems go for this week's meeting of Asian leaders, the CICC is far from finished.

As rain pelted yesterday, the roof of the new $11.2-million CICC did not leak, as it did following the abrupt cancellation in December of the summit meetings.

But as media teams moved into

NO-FLY ZONE/ A9

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

TUESDAY, JANUARY 9, 2007

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Second FRONTPAGE

Text us your feedback: inquirer news name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern and Southern Luzon will have cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers while Visayas and Mindanao will be cloudy with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms becoming widespread rains over Eastern Mindanao. The rest of the country will have mostly cloudy skies with light rainshowers.

COMPILED BY KATE PEDROSO, INQUIRER RESEARCH/01/08/07 SOURCE PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Cloudy with Rains	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Police arrest 'suicide' bomber

Suspect allegedly offered to drive truck bomb in '05

By Alcuin Papa

POLICE HAVE ARRESTED A Muslim radical who allegedly took part in the 2005 Valentine's Day bus bombing in Makati City which killed three people and injured 103 others.

The Philippine National Police (PNP) picked up Ricardo Ayeras alias Abdul Kareem Ayeras on Jan. 3 in Barangay Mangayao, Tagkawayan, Quezon province using a warrant of arrest for a rebellion case filed against him before a Makati City court.

He was arrested along with Jay Perez and Abdul Mujib.

Chief Supt. Romeo Ricardo, director of the PNP intelligence group, said Ayeras was allegedly involved in "Operation Big Bang," a plan by the Rajah Sulaiman Movement (RSM) to bomb several places in Metro Manila in 2005.

As part of the operation, a truck was supposed to ram bars and restaurants in the Rajah Sulaiman Park in Manila during Holy Week of 2005. Ayeras had allegedly planned the operation and volunteered to drive the truck.

"But the plan was foiled when we raided their safe house in Fairview, Quezon City in March 2005," Ricardo told reporters.

During the raid, 600 kilograms of explosive materials were recovered, as well as other paraphernalia used to construct bombs, mostly procured by Ayeras and De Vera.

Ricardo said that during the interrogation, Ayeras admitted that he had rented the apartment on Lilac Street, Fairview, Quezon City.

The PNP official also said that "Operation Big Bang" was supervised by Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) bomber Umar Patek in coordination with RSM founder Hilarion "Ahmad" Santos. The operation was funded by "sources from the Middle East."

Patek and another JI member Indonesian Dulmatin are wanted for the 2002 Bali bombing. The two are hiding from a military dragnet in Basilan and Sulu and are being aided by the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG).

Ayeras, Ricardo said, was a pioneering member of the RSM, a group of radical Muslim converts with ties to the ASG and the Indonesia-based JI, a terror ring with links to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network.

"He (Ayeras) is also tasked with the procurement of explosive materials. He made frequent logistic runs. He is considered a henchman of Santos," Ricardo said.

He said Ayeras could not have planned other bombing attacks because "he was busy hiding from authorities. That also holds true for other RSM members."

Ayeras converted to Islam in June 2002. He trained in an RSM camp in Anda, Pangasinan and managed to elude arrest after the camp was raided by police on May 1, 2002.

Sometime in 2003, Ayeras and other RSM members Pio De Vera, Feliciano "Abubakar" Delos Reyes and Ibrahim Kessel alias Abu Mujaheed, underwent military training conducted by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in the Liguasan Marsh in Sultan Kudarat Pendatun in Maguindanao. The camp was conducted by MILF leader Abdulmanap Mentang.

Ricardo also said that Ayeras was personally chosen by RSM leader Santos as one of the members of a core group tasked to conduct "Operation Big Bang."

The operation involved the bombing of key establishments in Metro Manila, including the Rajah Sulaiman Park along Roxas Boulevard, frequented by foreigners, particularly Americans.

After the raid on the Fairview house, Ayeras went into hiding with his wife Noemi in Negros Oriental using the name "Jay Perez" to elude arrest.

In March 2006, Ayeras moved to Nasugbu, Batangas to hide in a house owned by a relative of his wife.

In May, Ayeras started working for a fishpond owned by a friend in Tagkawayan, Quezon.

Three people have been sentenced to death for the Valentine's Day bombing in 2005. They are JI member Indonesian Rohmat alias Zaki, who trained in Mindanao starting 2003; Gamal Baharan, an alleged member of the ASG; and RSM member Angelo Trinidad.

POLICE officials present to media bombing suspect, Ricardo Ayeras, in a press conference at Camp Crame Monday.

Foreigners warned: You have until Monday to get your I-Cards

By Leila B. Salaverria

FOREIGNERS RESIDING IN THE Philippines only have until Monday next week to get their I-Cards or risk arrest and deportation, the Bureau of Immigration warned, saying the deadline would not be extended anymore.

The BI moved in the past the deadline for getting the electronic I-Cards, which would serve as proof of a foreign resident's registration, despite earlier pronouncements from its officials that it would not be extended.

Yesterday, BI Commissioner Alipio Fernandez Jr. said he saw no reason to extend the deadline because more than enough time was given to foreigners to apply for the electronic document, and because more applicants than the BI had expected had applied for the I-Card.

Fernandez said "optimum compliance" was already attained for the project, which was launched two years ago.

Some 101,000 foreigners have applied for the I-Card, while the BI only targeted 87,000, according to alien registration chief Danilo Almeda.

The immigration chief also warned that foreign residents without the I-Card after Jan. 15 could face arrest and deportation for being improperly documented aliens.

The I-Card replaces the paper-based alien certificate of registration that the bureau used to issue to foreign residents. It is touted to be tamper-proof and contains the owner's personal data that could be retrieved when the card is swiped in machines installed at airports.

Earlier, the BI moved the Aug. 13 deadline for securing the I-Card to Nov. 15. Fernandez said he wanted to achieve optimum compliance to the requirement to get the I-Card.

The Nov. 15 was also moved to Jan. 15 despite an earlier statement from BI Associate Commissioner Roy Almoro that it would not be extended.

In setting the new Jan. 15 deadline, Fernandez cited the "insistent" requests of foreign chambers of commerce. He also said he decided to set the new deadline so that foreigners who leave the country during the holidays could still have enough time to secure the I-Card upon their return.

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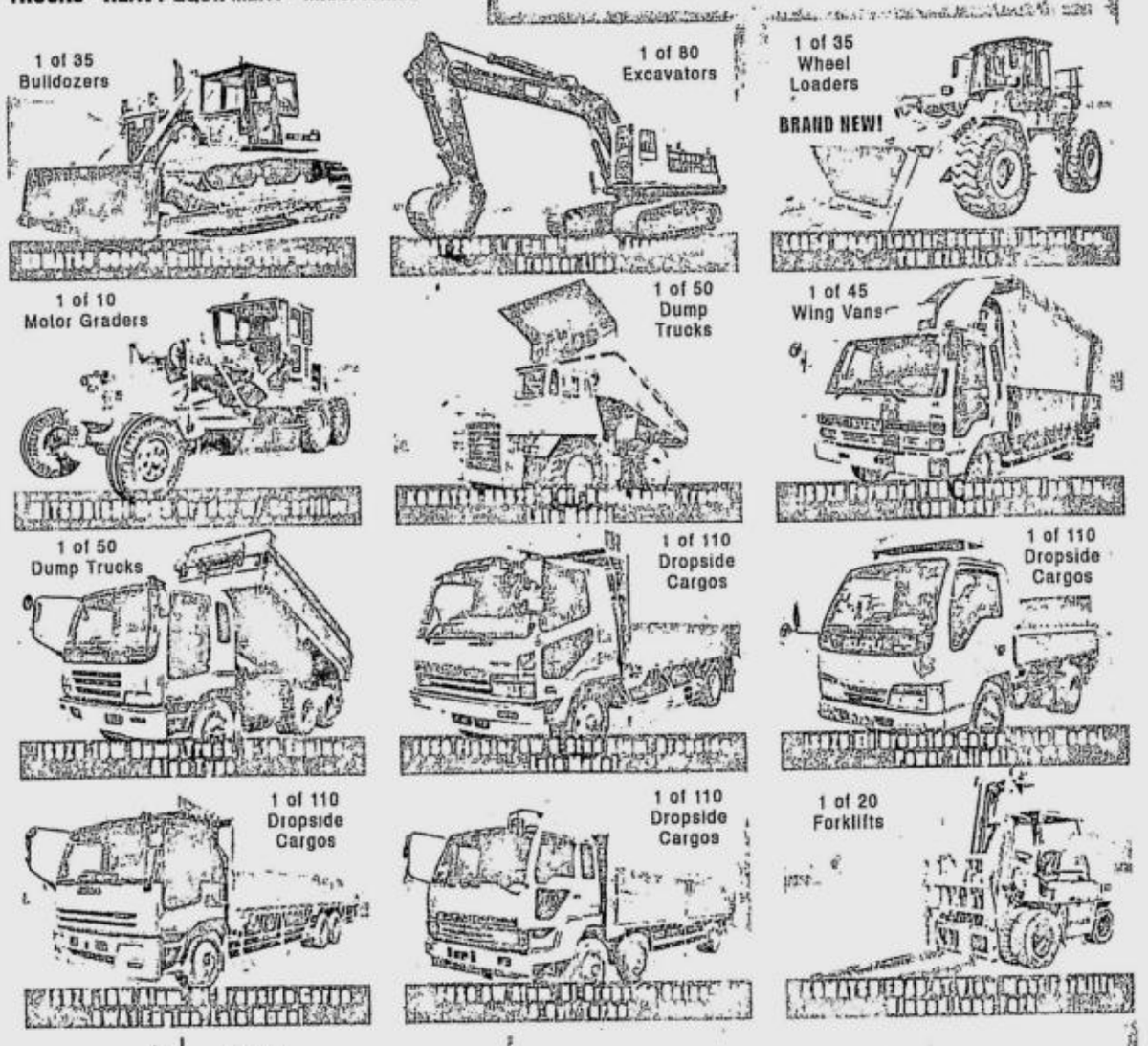

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2 Cabinet secretaries drop plans to run for Senate

TWO CABINET SECRETARIES YESTERDAY announced they had decided not to run for the Senate in the May elections.

In a press statement, Environment Secretary Angelo T. Reyes said he had decided to heed the advice of his friends not to run for the Senate.

"Some friends had been urging me to run for the Senate, while others had advised me to stay at the DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources). I opted for the latter," Reyes said.

Reyes said that while aspiring to be a senator "seemed attractive," he believed he was needed more in the environment agency.

He said he had already informed President Macapagal-Arroyo of his decision and the Chief Executive respected it.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap, meanwhile, also declared that he was no longer interested in running for the Senate in May.

"I'm not running (as) I believe I can do more here in the (Department of Agriculture)," Yap said.

Reyes and Yap were among the Cabinet officials earlier considered for the senatorial lineup of the administration coalition Lakas-CMD-Kampi. *Christine Gaylican*

Metro Manila Comelec chief relieved from post

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE DIRECTOR OF THE COMMISSION ON Election's National Capital Region Office has been removed from his post just five months before the May 2007 polls, a move that Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos denied would negatively affect the polls in Metro Manila.

Abalos said there were several reasons behind the transfer of Ferdinand Rafanan from the NCR office to the commissioner's office, including Rafanan's "insubordination" for his stand on the people's initiative to amend the Constitution that ran counter to that of the Comelec's legal department.

Rafanan had earlier said the poll agency could not entertain the petition for a people's initiative for Charter change, including the verification of the signatures of its supporters, based on a 1997 Supreme Court ruling.

The Comelec's legal department, headed by Alioden Dalaig, had said the commission could verify the signatures attached to the petition.

Rafanan was transferred on Dec. 7. Abalos said the NCR director's removal was the decision of the Comelec en banc and not his alone.

In March 2004, shortly before that year's presidential elections, Rafanan was also removed as director of the education and information department of the Comelec and transferred to eastern Visayas.

He had then protested the move, which he attributed to his statements that President Macapagal-Arroyo could have been disqualified as a presidential candidate if it were proved that she had violated election laws with her political ads.

Abalos also railed at Sen. Aquilino Pimentel's reported statement that Rafanan's transfer could be part of a plan to cheat in the coming elections in favor of the administration's candidates, or to resurrect the people's initiative to effect Charter change.

"He has a very malicious mind," Abalos said of Pimentel. "I don't know why his mind is always so full of cheating."

Meanwhile, a Comelec official privy to Rafanan's removal but who asked for anonymity because he was not authorized to speak on the issue said Rafanan had appealed his transfer and had asked for a copy of the en banc resolution adopting Dalaig's opinion as the commission's policy.

If there was no en banc resolution, Rafanan, according to the source, asked for a copy of the written lawful order that he had supposedly violated.

Dismiss media class suit, Mike A asks court

By Tarra Quismundo

FIRST GENTLEMAN JOSE Miguel Arroyo yesterday sought the dismissal of a class suit journalists filed against him last month for his alleged abuse of the libel law to intimidate the press.

In his 67-page reply filed before the Makati Regional Trial Court (RTC) yesterday, Arroyo invoked the limits to press freedom, asked that the unprecedented P12.5-million civil suit be junked and demanded that the complainants pay him more than four times this amount for moral and exemplary damages.

"The freedoms of speech and of the press are not absolute. Like any freedom, they are limited by the rights of others. The Speech and Press Clauses of the Constitution do not vest a license to defame. The libel laws serve precisely to balance freedoms against an individual's correlative right to his reputation," quoting Arroyo's reply, filed yesterday before Makati RTC Branch 143.

"This is not a class suit. Plaintiffs seek to vindicate personal and individual interests, albeit imagined. There is not even a juridical entity known as 'The Philippine Press,'" the pleading said.

Three media organizations and 36 print journalists had been sued by the First Gentleman for libel. They filed the damage suit on Dec. 28 against Arroyo citing that as a public figure, he was "fair game" and subject to fair comment.

In the suit, the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR), the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) and The Daily Tribune, and top editors, reporters and columnists of major broadsheets and news magazines alleged that Arroyo's libel suits were meant to "silence his critics in the press by causing a chilling effect upon the Philippine press at large."

Watchdog

The complainants, among them CMFR chair Vergel Santos, Newsbreak editors Marites Vitug and Glenda Gloria, the Tribune's editor-in-chief Niñez Cacho-Olivarez, the paper's columnist Lito Banayo, Malaya columnist Ellen Tordesillas, and Philippine Daily Inquirer columnists Conrado de Quiros and Ramon Tulfo, called the move a step to protect the Philippine press.

Sought for comment, Vitug said Arroyo's reply did not address the very reason the complaint was filed—to spare the press from the powerful who would abuse libel to repress practitioners.

"He's making it very technical and legalistic. He completely skirts the core issue, which is protecting the press. It's because we have an important function in a democracy—we are a watchdog," said Vitug in a phone interview.

"The core issue is still that libel shouldn't be used to intimidate the press," she added.

Political ploy

Offering a point-by-point rebuttal of the complaint, Arroyo said he was not a public figure and denied that his libel suits against journalists were "improperly motivated." He expressed disbelief "that any of the plaintiffs ever thought at all before they defamed him" and that they "observed legal limitations in writing the defamatory articles he has sued them for."

Calling the suit a "malicious prosecution in disguise," Arroyo's camp accused the complainants of being "apparently under the impression that media practitioners may accuse anyone recklessly with impunity."

"This case is clearly a mere political ploy [that] plaintiffs are using to harass and annoy the President and Jose Miguel... [The court] does not conduct 'social experiments' for litigants who have nothing better to do," Arroyo added.

Filed by his lawyer Ruy Alberto Rondain, the pleading denied that the First Gentleman "ignored the law," that he "abused the right to litigate," that he "intends to silence anyone," "that he has ever intended a barrage of libel suits," and "that he has ever acted maliciously... and unjustly."

Not a public figure

The reply quashed the claim that the First Gentleman was subject to media's fair comment, saying: "Jose Miguel is referred to as the First Gentleman by protocol, simply by virtue of his being married to the President. While he maintains an office as such, he draws no salary from government. He has no appointive or elective position. Jose Miguel is, therefore, not a public officer."

SOME 1,700 units of tents worth $800,000 (P39 million) donated by China for the victims of supertyphoon "Reming" arrive at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport via Air China. INQUIRER PHOTO / JESS YUSON

China sends 1,800 tents for homeless in Bicol

By Nikko Dizon

STURDY BLUE TENTS FROM China cannot exactly be called homes by the thousands of victims of Typhoon Reming but they represent a far better fare than the cramped quarters in school buildings serving as refugee stations.

The tents donated by the People's Republic of China, numbering 1,700 and worth about $800,000 arrived at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) yesterday via an Air China cargo plane from Beijing.

"These are very, very important because the families will have more appropriate places to stay," Esperanza Cabral, Social Welfare and Development secretary, told reporters after the tents were formally turned over by Chinese Ambassador Li Jinjun to the Philippine government last night.

Cabral said that the typhoon victims in Albay would get the bulk of the tents. About 40,000 families still lived in evacuation centers in Albay, she added.

With the tents from China, "we can relieve our schools which have served as evacuation centers," Cabral said.

Each tent has a floor area of approximately 20 square meters. They have windows for good ventilation.

"The families have been living in close quarters. With these tents, they can have some semblance of family life," the secretary said, adding her department would start sending the tents to Albay today.

Li said in a statement that he had received letters from local governors and congressmen requesting assistance for their storm-ravaged provinces.

"The Chinese Government attaches great importance to the appeal of the Philippine government, and is very much concerned about reconstruction of the inflicted area," Li said.

Padua, UP student leader during Marcos regime; 54

REGINO "REGGIE" B. PADUA, A student leader of the University of the Philippines during the martial law regime of Ferdinand Marcos, died on Saturday. He was 54.

A member of La Salle Greenhills Class '69 and champion debater in college, Padua was elected to the UP Student Council in 1971 and president of the UP College of Arts and Science Council in 1972. He was briefly detained after Marcos declared martial law on Sept. 21, 1972.

Padua later ventured into business, establishing Islas Glass Corp. in the 1980s. His company's glass etchings adorn many of the country's premier buildings, high-rise condominiums, posh restaurants and fine homes.

He is survived by his wife, Marites Marfori-Padua, and their son, Brian "Bayan" Padua, a De La Salle NCAA champion swimmer.

His body lies at St. Alphonsus Liguori Chapel, Magallanes Village, Makati City. Burial has been scheduled at the Manila Memorial Park, Sucat Road, Paranaque, after the 9 a.m. Mass on Jan. 13.

Appraiser places 'Payanig' property at only P3B

By Daxim L. Lucas

THE CONTROVERSIAL "PAYAnig sa Pasig" property sequestered by the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) may be worth a lot less than what the agency is expecting to sell it for this year.

According to a report prepared by a real estate appraising firm, this large tract of land in the Ortigas business district is worth P3.3 billion at most, mainly because it is "undeveloped."

The report, prepared by Cuervo Appraisers, Inc., said that the property, which hosts the popular Metrowalk arcade, should be valued "realistically" at around P18,000 per square meter—a far cry from the value the PCGG is hoping to sell it for.

Last year, PCGG Commissioner Ricardo Abcede said he would prioritize the disposal this year of big-ticket items in its inventory of sequestered assets.

This includes the Payanig property, which at 18.5 hectares, is one of the largest real estate assets held by agency.

Abcede said the property could fetch anywhere from P15 billion to P18 billion according to an independent assessor commissioned by the PCGG, putting the property's value at P100,000 per square meter—a price level currently found only within the Makati central business district.

Cuervo Appraisers has a long history of valuing property in the Ortigas area, being one of the original firms that did business with Ortigas & Co., the main commercial developer of the area.

Bound by Ortigas, Meralco and Julia Vargas Avenues, the property was originally owned by the Ortigas family and was allegedly bought under duress by the late strongman Ferdinand E. Marcos at an undervalued price of P40 per square meter when a nearby property was sold at P160 per square meter during the same period.

It was sequestered by the government in the wake of the 1986 Edsa Revolution and has since been in legal limbo while the courts try to determine how the property should be disposed of.

Ortigas & Co. is now negotiating with the PCGG for a 65-35 percent partition of the property's value, in favor of the government. The deal, however, has proceeded at a snail's pace and was further delayed by the Senate's probe on the agency last year.

According to the Cuervo report, the Payanig property's peak value when fully developed will reach only P9 billion—which is half of what the PCGG is expecting—considering that only 12.9 hectares will be "sellable," while the rest will be converted into roadways and open space.

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STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

GMA, Erap sleeping with the 'enemy'

By TJ Burgonio

EVEN AS THEY SCRAMBLE TO forge alliances for the May 14 elections, the camps of President Macapagal-Arroyo and ousted President Joseph Estrada are facing the same dilemma—whether to admit bitter political enemies to their respective folds, Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago said yesterday.

"On the administration's part, it can't accept anti-Gloria incumbents without jeopardizing its own survival because it has been shown in the past that administration candidates feel free to become opposition or maverick senators," Santiago said in an interview.

If it fields former allies-turned-critics for this year's midterm elections, the administration "might lose a loyalist majority" in the Senate and House of Representatives, she said.

In 2005, most of President Arroyo's allies in the Senate turned against her and declared their independence after the "Hello Garci" election fraud controversy that strongly suggested she had conspired with Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano to rig the 2004 presidential elections.

The opposition camp, on the other hand, "can't accept those who were anti-Estrada during the impeachment proceedings [against the former president in 2000] without losing credibility," Santiago said.

"If Estrada accepts these applicants, he would be allowing himself to be used as a tool for victory of those who had once sought to destroy him," she said.

"Both sides are grappling with this dilemma; it's a gordian knot," said the senator, who is a staunch ally of the President's.

The coming elections is seen as a "proxy war" between Ms Arroyo and Estrada, whom she succeeded after he was driven out of power by a people power revolt in January 2001 amid charges of corruption, incompetence and inefficiency.

Estrada's Puwersa ng Masa party has been locked in exploratory talks with Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay's PDP-Laban, the Liberal Party wing of Sen. Franklin Drilon and Senate President Manuel Villar Jr.'s Nacionalista Party, among other parties, over the possibility of fielding a common 12-man senatorial slate.

Estrada, who is under house arrest and awaiting the verdict in his trial on plunder and perjury charges, is still the acknowledged leader of the United Opposition (UNO).

The coalition was eyeing Villar and maybe Sen. Joker Arroyo, two House leaders then who had spearheaded the impeachment case against Estrada in 2000, and reelectionist Senators Francis Pangilinan, Ralph Recto and Panfilo Lacson for its slate, according to the former President's son, Sen. Jinggoy Estrada.

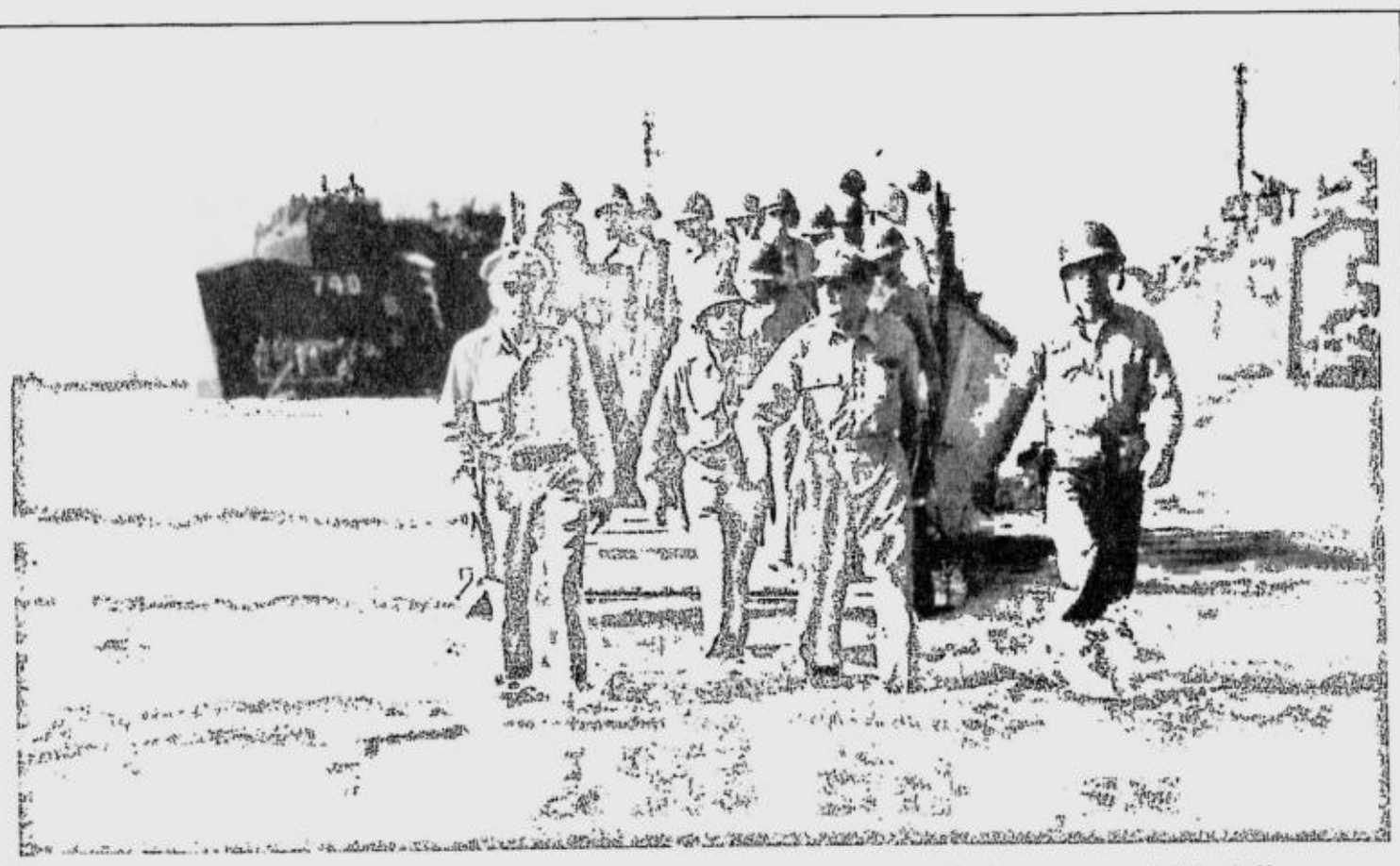
Ms Arroyo, who survived impeachment attempts in 2005 and 2006 arising from the poll fraud scandal, should be certain of her candidates' loyalty to ensure a "smooth administration" until the end of her term in 2010, Santiago said.

"Common sense dictates that her enemies should not be empowered to use her endorsement just to gain temporary popularity to capture an office from which they could oppose her in the future," she said.

"The problem of the administration is bigger because there's this lurking suspicion that the administration ticket will only serve as a vehicle for certain candidates to win without an assurance that they would support administration measures," she added.

The success of a third impeachment case against Ms Arroyo this year would depend on the political configuration in both chambers of Congress after the May polls, observers have pointed out.

Former critics of Estrada, however, who would be joining the UNO-led coalition could not expect to get the solid support of the ex-leader's followers come election time, according to Santiago.



"REPEATING an earlier triumphant gesture, General Douglas MacArthur strides through shin-deep waters to the island of Luzon on January 9, 1945. MacArthur had fought for almost three years to fulfill his pledge to return to the Philippines. His first walk ashore had occurred on Leyte on October 20, 1944." That's the full photo caption from the book "Return to the Philippines" by Rafael Steinberg and the editors of Time-Life Books.

Lingayen, Dagupan still at 'war' 62 years after MacArthur returned

By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes
Inquirer Northern Luzon

LINGAYEN, PANGASINAN—Sixty-two years after Gen. Douglas McArthur made his historic return to the Philippines, residents of this town as well as of Dagupan City are still debating where MacArthur actually landed.

MacArthur and his forces landed on Jan. 9, 1945 on the shores of the Lingayen Gulf to start the US military's campaign to recapture Luzon from the Japanese.

Old residents of Lingayen insist that MacArthur and his troops landed on their town's shores while Dagupeños claim that the general landed in their city, as there are photographs showing him walking on the streets of Dagupan. The general also visited the home economics building at the West Central Elementary School in the city.

Former Agrarian Reform Minister Conrado Estrella Sr. said the debate should stop.

"The fact is [MacArthur] landed in Pangasinan, period," he said.

Estrella revealed that he was governor of Pangasinan when MacArthur came to the Philippines for a "sentimental journey" on July 6, 1961.

"I received him at the boundary of Tarlac and Nueva Ecija and we motored to Lingayen. A typhoon was raging but people came out [of their houses and stood on the streets] to wave at him. We arrived at the Urduja House (the governor's official residence) at noon," he said.

Estrella said the first question he asked MacArthur was: "There is a raging controversy on where you [actually] landed. [Was it in] Lingayen or Dagupan?"

Estrella said MacArthur walked to the porch of Urduja House and asked, "Where's the capitol?"

He directed the general to the capitol's location.

MacArthur, as quoted by Estrella, then said: "First we were bombing the shores but there was no retaliation. So we took a boat and landed behind the capitol. When we were sure there were no more Japanese, we returned to the boat and [sailed] to Dagupan. We settled at the home economics building where we put up our headquarters."

Estrella said MacArthur visited the said building in Dagupan, pointed to the bathroom and said, "This is the toilet I used."

Estrella said the debate on the issue should stop because it was MacArthur himself who told him where he landed.

"I'm the only authority [on the issue who is] still alive," he said.

'Nicole' asks Supreme Court to declare VFA unconstitutional

From page A1

sought to declare Article V, Paragraph 6, of the VFA, which was used as the basis for Smith's transfer to the US Embassy, "unconstitutional and of no effect" for being "violative of petitioner's rights to due process and the equal protection of the laws."

"Due process demands that Smith, who has been found guilty beyond reasonable doubt by the trial court of the nonbailable crime of rape, be detained in a Philippine jail for the entire duration of the judicial proceedings, including during the pendency of his appeal, in accordance with our rules of procedure and the longstanding practice in our judicial system," Ursua said.

She also claimed as faulty the Palace officials' insistence that the language of Article V, Paragraph 6 of the VFA supported the validity of the Dec. 22 agreement.

Plain language

"If this so-called plain language argument of the public respondents were adopted, then Article V, Paragraph 6 of the VFA should be declared unconstitutional and invalid on its face."

Nicole then asked the high court to "annul and set aside the agreements" entered into by Romulo and Kenney.

She urged the Supreme Court to declare the release of Smith from the Makati City Jail and his turnover to the US Embassy as "violative of the Constitution, statutes and the rules of court."

Nicole also asked the high court to issue a warrant of arrest against Smith and direct Malacañang through the departments of justice and foreign affairs "to immediately undertake steps to serve the warrant of arrest for respondent Smith to be returned to the custody of the Philippine government and to be detained in a Philippine facility run by Philippine authorities."

Palace stand

Malacañang assured the public that Smith would stay in a Philippine jail if the Supreme Court upheld his rape conviction.

In an interview, Apostol said: "It was committed here and it should be here that he should be incarcerated. We are firm on that. I think the Philippine government is not willing to agree that in case of conviction, he should be transferred to US territory."

Apostol noted that under the VFA, both the Philippines and the United States had to agree on where to incarcerate Smith should his conviction become final.

Contrary to critics' claims, Apostol said it was the US government and not the Philippine government that surrendered its sovereignty when Smith was transferred to the US Embassy.

"They (the US) have waived part of their jurisdiction ... they allowed our officials to get inside, give them free access," he said.

As far as the government was concerned, Apostol said the custody issue was a "closed book" and that the public should now focus on whether Smith was guilty or not.

Apostol said the Smith case had prompted Malacañang and the Department of Foreign Affairs to study whether there was a need to review the VFA specifically on the issues of sovereignty, jurisdiction and custody, particularly the criminal aspect and criminal procedures.

Apostol proposed that the Philippines limit the movement of American troops during their rest and recreation activities "so that we'll not experience this kind of experience [rape case]."

URSUA

Nothing but the truth with Internet lie detector

From page A1

across the Internet.

"We tested it with the (former US President Bill) Clinton speech about his relationship with his intern Monica Lewinsky," said Zvi Marom, head of the company behind the product.

"When he says 'I have never had sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky,' the lie detector's needle jumps through the roof," said Marom, the founder and CEO of BATM Advanced Communications, a high-tech firm in an industrial park on the outskirts of Netanya on Israel's northern coast.

Since signing a deal last December with Internet telephony giant Skype, the company's server has crashed five times after tens of thousands of Web users rushed to download the lie detector, offered for free.

"This is a really neat application, and the kind of thing we want to see more of," said a statement from Paul Amery, director of the Skype Developer program.

The six employees of BATM subsidiary KishKish (www.kishkish.com) in Israel and Bulgaria developed the add-on, which has an interface resembling a real polygraph, complete with monitors and needles.

ISRAELI Alex Rosenbaum, head of development at the Israeli high-tech company KishKish, tests the newly developed lie detector software near the coastal city of Netanya. AFP

Stress levels

It is one of many new applications for Internet telephony, which is rapidly becoming one of the most popular methods of communication.

The lie detector monitors in real time the stress levels in a speaker's voice.

"In the end, the voice is the biggest manifesto of what we think," said Marom.

Voice stress analysis (VSA) is a disputed technology that attempts to measure stress levels by observing the amplitude of tremors in a person's voice. The Israeli military is often cited as a major user of this technology.

A user of the Internet lie detector needs to talk for 15 seconds to calibrate his or her voice, then sound waves start to peak if stress levels are high, a light flashes from green to red and a needle jumps to the end of a scale.

Despite little evidence to prove that lie-detecting machines work, let alone over the Internet, KishKish and Skype clients remain unfazed.

Employees spend hours responding to e-mail and forums from thousands of users across the world, and they brush off criticism on their Web forum from people having trouble using the tool.

"If you just make something up for the sake of it, it won't work because you won't be stressed," explained Alex Rosenbaum, 35, head of development at KishKish.

The company said it tested the tool on an insurance company that reported it was more than 90 percent accurate. It also said it had requests from police services to adopt the software, and even offers from former Russian spies to help develop it.

"I get a lot of e-mail about people wanting to carry out professional interviews over Skype, but we say you should check with your legal authorities," Rosenbaum said.

The lie detector warns users when they are being monitored to avoid legal problems, he added.

Add-ons

Working with Skype for more than a year, KishKish has developed a number of add-ons for Internet telephone services, including an answering machine, contacts book and Short Message Service (SMS), but none has been as popular as the lie detector.

KishKish sees the project as a further attempt to stretch the possibilities of Internet communications, and for now—like many Internet start-ups—it offers the product for free.

"We're trying to play in the right area and build the correct business model for the future," said Rosenbaum.

Workers at the small office, in a landscape of palm tree-lined roads, shopping malls and beachside apartments, spend many hours playing with ideas for a range of new products.

The next one they plan to release is a "Love-o-meter," designed to detect emotional interest levels across the Web.

"They'll like it in France," Marom predicted. *AFP*

Budget for debt service padded by P6.6 B, says Recto

By Cynthia D. Balana

RECTO

THE P318.8-BILLION ALLOCATION FOR debt service under this year's proposed P1.126 trillion national budget was padded by at least P6.6 billion due to "imprecise foreign exchange assumption," according to Sen. Ralph Recto.

Recto said the budget for debt service was computed using a $1 to P53 exchange rate, way above the projected average of $1 to P50.

The peso was trading at an average of 48.50 to the greenback last week which, Recto said, was consistent with analysts' projection that good fiscal numbers of the government would keep the local currency below the 50 level this year.

The government is scheduled to pay foreign creditors $2.209 billion in interest expenses this year.

Recto said that by using a 53 to $1 exchange rate, the amount earmarked for interest in the national budget reached P117.06 billion. But by adopting a lower but realistic 50 to $1 exchange rate, he said, interest payments on foreign liabilities would go down to P110.45 billion.

"This will free up P6.6 billion in non-productive expense for social services. I am recommending that this be used for education projects instead. This debt-for-education scheme can end the deadlock over the budget," Recto said.

Recto proposed that the possible excess amount from debt service be channeled to fund both school feeding and school building programs.

On concerns that the feeding program can be used for electioneering, Recto said safeguards could be instituted to prevent abuse.

"In the first place, this should not be an either or situation in which you choose one over the other. Why not choose both so that children can have their food and their new classrooms?" Recto said.

In its version of the 2007 budget, the Senate scrapped the P4.7 billion allocation for the feeding program that would grant a kilo of rice to a grade schooler from a poor family for every day of class attended.

The Senate instead proposed that the amount be used to build more classrooms and hire additional teachers to wipe out shortages in both.

Recto insisted that "budget space" could be created to accommodate two worthwhile programs that should not be made to compete against each other for funds.

One way of doing this, he said, was to reduce the allocation for debt service in view of the continued strengthening of the peso, a move that will free enough resources to fund school initiatives.

"We can set the conditions that bulk of the program will commence in June, next school year, which is after May elections. We can also impose the requirement that as much as possible the rice to be distributed be procured locally," Recto said.

"We can expand the menu so it won't be devoted solely to rice only, so that locally available and abundant food, like vegetables in the Cordilleras be the staple that would be distributed in the region," he added.

Recto said the Senate could ask the National Nutrition Council to come up with food preparations that would satisfy basic nutritional requirements.

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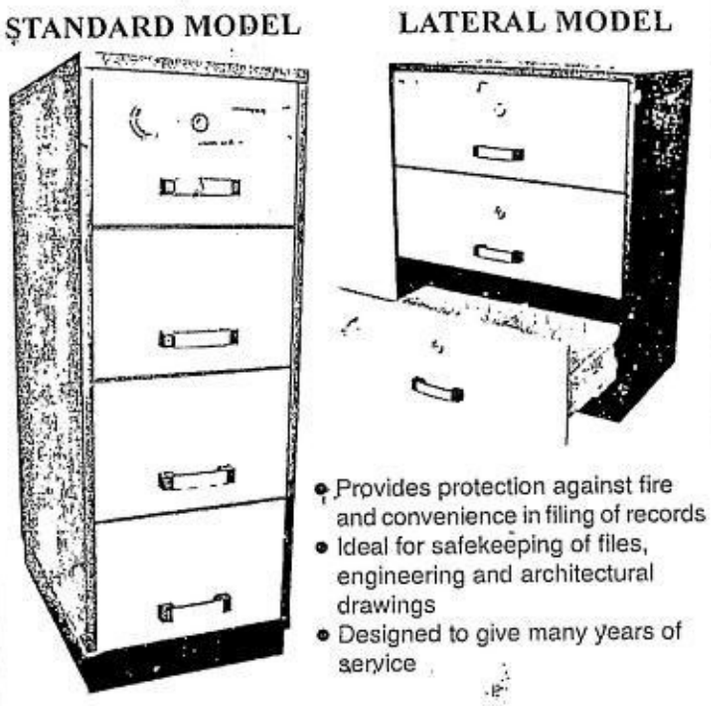
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Favored suppliers bag AFP deals

From page A1

P900 million for the Philippine Army. The voice-encrypted radios are basic equipment that could spell life and death for soldiers in the field. But after three years, the DND and AFP still have not resolved whether to buy them by direct contracting or public bidding.

- Last year, the Army asked the Department of Budget and Management Procurement Service to purchase, through public bidding, some 1,400 sets of tires for trucks worth more than P12 million. After the notice of award was issued to the winning bidder, the Army blocked the awarding of the contract. The purchase remains stalled.
- Since 2000, the Army has refused to honor a P201-million contract to repair 30 Scorpion tanks that would have given soldiers added firepower in the field. The budget, meanwhile, for the repair is dwindling, with millions of pesos having gone to storage fees for spare parts and to bank charges.

"If the AFP can't resolve these problems, how much more the bigger contracts under the AFP Modernization Program (AFPMP)?" asked an official involved in AFP procurement contracts.

Indeed, officials in the defense and budget departments fear that scarce government resources may go to waste because of bad procurement practices that remain uncorrected in the AFP.

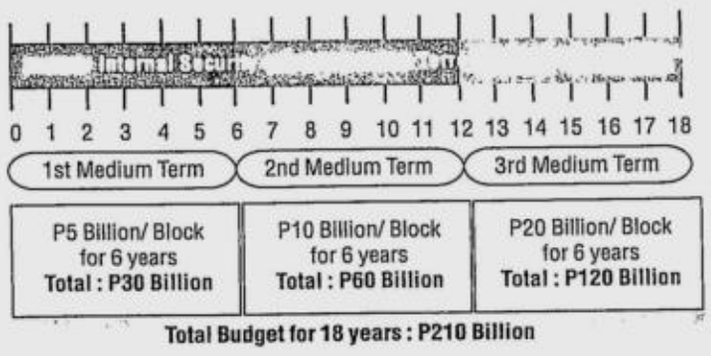
A study done in 2006 by the Government Procurement Policy Board (GPPB) found "a high level of noncompliance" by the AFP with Republic Act No. 9184, the Government Procurement Reform Act. The law is intended to streamline government purchases and prevent corruption that has arisen out of procurements.

"There is no integrated or comprehensive strategy to implement procurement reforms in line with RA No. 9184 in the AFP," said the GPPB report.

AFP Modernization Program

MARINES rest as they move closer to a rebel stronghold in Maguindanao.
EDWIN BACASMAS

AFP Capability Upgrade Plan



Philippine Army's Idle Letters of Credit at Land Bank of the Philippines (As of Dec. 31, 2005)

Check No.	Date	Nature of Transaction	Amount	Remarks
69148	31-Mar-99	Procurement of 87,500 rds. Ctg. 5.56 mm ball	1,351,875.00	P187,197.00 (Partial delivery)
108840	15-Aug-00	Procurement of Assorted ammunition and publication from US Army Assistance Command	15,865,099.00	No delivery
0108990	27-Mar-01	Procurement of spare parts CVR	10,664,525.00	P28,576,208.59
0108991		(5) scorpion tanks thru SSA from	121,626,975.00	(Partial delivery)
0108992		ALVIS Logistics Ltd.	69,148,762.00	
172701	27-Sep-02	Procurement of eight (8) thermal images procured from US Army Security Assistance Command	10,000,000.00	P459,703.30 (Partial Delivery)
229295	10-Mar-04	Shipment charges for 231 pcs. spares, 3 pcs. barrel grenade launcher, machine gun parts	7,761,093.18	P7,154,279.82 (Partial Delivery)
210840	22-Sep-04	Procurement of 13,245 rds ctg. 7.62 mm linked (matched)	999,997.50	No delivery
210842	22-Sep-04	20,253 ctg 5.56 mm match	799,993.50	No delivery
210843	22-Sep-04	20,506 rds 5.56 match	809,987.00	No delivery
210837	22-Sep-04	30,947 rds. Ctg 9 mm	799,979.95	No delivery
210838	22-Sep-04	38,684 rds. Ctg. 9 mm match	999,981.40	No delivery
210839	22-Sep-04	11,125 rds. Ctg. 7.62 mm linked	839,937.50	No delivery
210841	22-Sep-04	25,316 rds. Ctg.5.56 mm match	999,982.00	No delivery

INQGRAPHIC: ERNIE SAMBO/ ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

Splitting purchase orders

The GPPB assessment noted deviations from procurement procedures in the AFP, and the military's preference for shopping, using cash advance, and direct contracting over public bidding, as well as for splitting purchase orders. These problems are likewise documented in annual audits done on the Army, Navy and Air Force by the Commission on Audit.

The GPPB's attention was also drawn to the creation of multiple bids and awards committees under the various service commands and the lack of a pool of competent and trained personnel for assignment to the AFP bids and awards committee.

Officials also point to other problems. One is that military officers lack the financial, management and technical expertise required to handle multibillion-peso transactions which, some say, arose partly from the AFP's decades of dependence on the United States for the bulk of its defense spending on materiel until the American bases in the Philippines were closed in 1992.

To make matters worse, a hierarchical organization, like the AFP, with its bonds of brotherhood and code of silence, discourages transparency and scrutiny of misdeeds, according to those interviewed for this report.

And while the AFP top brass wrangle over knotty contracts, equipment on which the lives of ordinary soldiers depend remains lacking in the field.

Handheld radios

The minimum requirement for Army units is tactical communication, including simple handheld radios, which allow secure contact between units. The AFP's total requirement for handheld radios is 14,002 units.

In November 2003, the AFP was allowed to purchase 12,046 VHF/FM radios worth P930.8 million under the AFP Modernization Program's Re-Prioritized Projects Lists for 2000 and 2002. This was supposed to supplement the 1,946 already purchased from Harris Corp., an American firm.

The AFP, under then Chief of Staff Gen. Narciso Abaya, recommended that the radios be bought, again from Harris Corp., this time through direct contracting for interoperability and security reasons. Abaya's proposal was approved by then Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita, endorsed by then Justice Secretary Simeon Datumanong and then Director General Romulo Neri of the National Economic and Development Authority.

The negotiations were completed and a contract ironed out nearly a year later in October 2004. A new set of officials led by then Presidential Legal Counsel Avelino Cruz moved into the DND and decided to refer the contract to the GPPB. The GPPB recommended the renegotiation of the contract in keeping with RA No. 9184.

In April 2005, Abaya signed an amended contract with Harris and sent this to Cruz who, in turn, sent it to the GPPB for review. By this time, President Macapagal-Arroyo had issued an order requiring government contracts of at least P500 million to be submitted to the GPPB to determine whether they are exempt from public bidding.

The GPPB declared that the radios were best procured through public bidding. It also ruled that without Cruz's approval and certification that the contract was exempt from public bidding, it had to be bid out.

For direct contracting

The AFP, now under Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr., stands firm on direct contracting as the mode to procure the radios. The DND's defense acquisition committee and its bids and awards committee, meanwhile, had recommended to Cruz shortly before he quit his post the purchase of the units through negotiated procurement.

The fate of the contract lies with Ms Arroyo, concurrently the defense secretary. As head of the procuring agency, her approval is needed for the contract to move.

In the meantime, one procurement official said: "Our soldiers in the field are complaining due to lack of communication equipment ... That's why in combat operations, *lagi tayo nahuhuli* (we always lag behind)."

Scorpion tanks

In December 2000, the British company Alvis Logistics clinched the P201-million contract to supply spare parts and maintain the Army's 30 Combat Vehicle Reconnaissance (CVR) Tracked Scorpion tanks. Then AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Angelo Reyes approved Alvis Logistics' price list.

Funded out of the contingency fund of then President Joseph Estrada, the contract provided a 30-percent or P60-million down payment to Alvis Logistics, whose exclusive distributor in the Philippines is Bairam Enterprises. As with the supplier's previous contracts with the Army, the rest of the payment was to be released on a staggered basis, upon delivery of the spare parts and repair of the tanks.

But when Alvis Logistics delivered the first shipment worth about P40 million in April 2001, the Army, then under Maj. Gen. Efren Abu, refused to release the amount, raising allegations of overpricing and insisting that the British firm first use up the P60 million down payment. Reyes, by then the defense secretary, suspended the contract.

Bairam representative Rosario Ong later filed charges with the Ombudsman for the military in connection with the Scorpion tanks contract. News reports at the time quoted her as asking the Senate blue ribbon committee to investigate Reyes' alleged abuse of authority, and accusing him of wanting to give the contract to another supplier.

When Eduardo Ermita became defense secretary in 2003, he ordered the Army to honor its contract with Alvis Logistics. The COA, meanwhile, recommended that the supplier be partially paid on top of the down payment. The Army, however, refused to release another payment-whether full or partial-for the spare parts.

Sources familiar with the contract said the DND and Ong finally came to a settlement. Ong withdrew the case with the Ombudsman with the understanding that the contract would be implemented as originally agreed upon. Apparently, the settlement in the end fell through.

By August 2004, when Cruz became defense secretary, the GPPB, to which the issue had been raised, ruled that Alvis Logistics should first exhaust the downpayment it had gotten. Still insisting on payment per delivery, Alvis Logistics has refused to ship the rest of the spare parts and send its technicians to repair the tanks.

Letters of credit

All this time, the P141 million that remained of the contract has been sitting idle at Land Bank of the Philippines, where a letter of credit had been opened as mode of payment. It does not earn interest because, based on rules of the Bankers Association of the Philippines, "deposits against foreign and domestic letters of credit are received by banks merely as collateral security, consequently, no interest is to be allowed on said deposits."

Instead, the government has had to pay the bank several hundreds of thousands of pesos for every renewal. Earlier, it had to pay storage fees to the international airport for holding the spare parts while it argued its case with Bairam.

The Scorpion tanks contract was not awarded under the AFPMP, but the risks of letter of credit payments are not lost on the special COA team that looked into the modernization procurements. After all, most transactions entered into by the program with foreign suppliers are covered by such payments, including purchases of squad automatic weapons and the initial batch of Harris radios, refurbishing of Jacinto Class Patrol Vessels, and the procurement of a Geographical Information System.

"(The) amount of contracts funded out of modernization funds and paid through letters of credit are deposited in full in advance at the drawee bank even before the actual delivery of the subject of the contract, which usually takes as long as seven months, therefore depriving the agency of the beneficial use of the fund," the COA team said.

As the experience with the Scorpion tanks demonstrates, letters of credit can be left lying in banks earning no interest for as long as six years. A regular COA audit found last year that the Army had 11 other idle LCs with LandBank after foreign contractors failed to deliver the goods. "Considering the meager resources of the (Army), we are concerned that government funds and resources are wasted," the COA said.

Lack of expertise

Defense and budget officials attribute the procurement malpractice prevalent in the AFP not only to a lack of financial expertise but also to a lack of experience and knowledge of what items exactly they are procuring.

The DBM Procurement Service, which buys common supplies for government agencies, cites the contract to purchase 1,458 sets of tires for Army trucks. Last year, the Army asked the DBM-PS to procure the tires through public bidding for an approved budget of P8,720 each or a total of P12.7 million. Unfortunately, beyond the size and the ply, it did not indicate any other specifications.

A bidding conducted in February 2006 failed because bidders submitted incomplete documents. Another bidding was conducted in May. Because the Army did not have any other specifications, the DBM-PS did not require a testing of the items. "There was nothing to test because the Army did not specify the chemical composition, bursting strength, tensile strength, extent of elasticity, air capacity. Nobody (in the Army) knows that," said DBM-PS Executive Director Estanislao Granados.

Based on the specs the Army itself gave, the DBM-PS issued a notice of award to Prisma Gold, the lowest bidder which had complied with the specs and offered to supply each tire set for P7,232.80. But the Army opposed the awarding, claiming an overprice. One of the losing bidders, a company called Capital, had submitted to the Army a canvass of quotations that were lower than Prisma's—after the bidding. To this day, the dispute remains unresolved.

Procurement officials say that up to now, the military still has no clear-cut specifications even for simple items that fall under combat, clothing and individual equipment (CCIE) like combat shoes, which are made either of canvas or nylon, and for exactly what shade of green and camouflage are the clothing material they use for uniforms.

"The camouflage has five different colors there, including brown, green, black, khaki. If one color doesn't match, reject. *Sakit ng ulo* (It makes your head ache)," Granados said.

As a result, procurements for these simple items get stalled for as long as two years, as in the case of P9.8 million worth of safety boots the Navy needs. The items have still not been bid out after the Navy failed to submit the specifications to the DBM-PS.

Delayed deliveries by the DBM-PS are borne out in COA reports. By the end of 2005, it still had to deliver CCIE and other items amounting to P597.9 million to the Army; P97.7 million to the Navy; and P72 million to the Air Force.

This lack of expertise has been a hallmark of AFP procurement, according to budget and defense officials. It has caused ill-advised purchases such as the 402 Squad Automatic Weapons, which were bought without the belt-fed ammunition.

"*Ano 'yan? Batuta?* (What are those? Police batons)?" an exasperated defense official equipped when he learned of the incomplete purchase.

Dependent on suppliers

Because of this lack of expertise, the military tends to become dependent on suppliers who dictate what items to buy and what the specifications are, usually tailor-made to match their own product lines.

Military suppliers interviewed for this report say it is common knowledge in the DND and AFP that with each reorganization in the military, a new general brings in his own set of favored suppliers who corner procurement contracts while that official and his subordinates or Philippine Military Academy classmates remain in the service.

Usually, suppliers start developing relationships with military officials early in their careers. "Major *pa lang ang mga yan, inaalagan na bilang kontak* (We nurture the relationships even when they are still majors)," said one supplier.

Relationships such as these develop to the point where the supplier gets to dictate the items that the military should purchase, usually from the supplier himself or herself, in the process influencing the unit's plans and priorities.

"Of course, there is a bidding, *pero pag alam mo na may* anointed supplier, *'di ka na sasali* (If you know the anointed supplier, you don't join anymore)," said another supplier who now no longer wants to do business with the AFP.

Send-off checks

This practice enriches the select group of suppliers while leaving out other legitimate companies. When the general retires, these suppliers also chip in to give him a fat send off paycheck, known in military circles as "*pabaon*," suppliers said.

But the lines between the military and its suppliers are sometimes blurred, especially when a supplier is a retired general or colonel, or the wife of either a retired or active official. Suppliers can easily point to a number of defense manufacturing firms whose representatives are former high-ranking officials of the AFP.

Former AFP comptroller Carlos Garcia is one AFP official who had many dealings with suppliers. Garcia, found guilty by court-martial of amassing ill-gotten wealth, is serving a two-year prison term.

His wife Clarita, in defending her husband's questionable wealth, had said: "My husband also receives cash for travel and expenses in Europe and Asia that are awarded contracts for military hardware. He also receives gifts and gratitude money from several Philippine companies that are awarded military contracts to build roads, bridges and military housing."

"Garcia was not an anomaly in the AFP," said a bureaucrat who has dealt with the AFP many times. "There are a thousand Garcias in the AFP, but only one got caught." *(To be concluded tomorrow.)*

Ex-DOJ chief Perez faces ...

From page A1

Coutts Bank in Hong Kong in February 2001, which was transferred later to Arceo and Rosario Perez's Swiss accounts.

The Perezes later declared in their joint counteraffidavit that the funds were proceeds from the sale of their Batangas property, Malvarosa Ventures, to Escaler, contrary to a previous assertion that the funds "constituted the inheritance of Rosario and Arceo."

(The INQUIRER tried but failed to reach Perez at his house in Mt. View Subdivision in Batangas City.)

MOU not notarized

Investigators discovered that the memorandum of understanding was not notarized and was at most a "mere private instrument" that did not prove that a sale had been really effected.

"The denial of Perez cannot overcome the positive assertion of Jimenez, more so that the charges were substantiated with convincing evidence," the prosecutors said.

In early 2003, Perez resigned from the Cabinet of President Macapagal-Arroyo amid accusations that he had extorted money from Jimenez.

Impsa deal

The $2 million was alleged to have come from a $14-million bribe for the approval of the contract for the Caliraya-Botocan-Kalayaan hydroelectric plant won by Argentina's Industrias Metalurgicas Pescarmona Sociedad Anonima (Impsa).

The project was approved by the administration of Joseph Estrada, was allegedly brokered by Jimenez, and later endorsed by Perez.

Jimenez had accused Perez of demanding money "so that he would stop forcing Jimenez to execute damaging affidavits against certain individuals in the administration of Estrada," the prosecutors said.

In a privilege speech in 2002, then Representative Jimenez said that Perez had demanded that he execute an affidavit against cronies of Estrada, which would be used against them if they would not support Ms Arroyo in the 2004 presidential election.

Jimenez said that when he refused, Perez cursed and threatened him in front of his wife at his home in Forbes Park in Makati City in the third week of January 2001, or shortly after Ms Arroyo came to power.

It was Escaler who allegedly came up with the proposition that Jimenez just pay $2 million, to which Perez agreed, according to Jimenez.

The Ombudsman also dismissed Perez's earlier contention that the money formed part of his wife's inheritance two years before, since he had failed to disclose the assets in his statements of assets and liabilities in 2001 and 2002.

Conspiracy

"This office finds that Perez, in conspiracy with Escaler, Arceo and Rosario Perez, took advantage of his position as justice secretary by demanding [that] Jimenez deliver the $2 million in connection with the execution of affidavits," the Ombudsman said.

Documents gathered by prosecutors showed that Jimenez deposited $2 million in February 2001 in beneficiary account H0133706 in Coutts Bank in Hong Kong from the Trade and Commerce Bank, Cayman Islands, through Chase Manhattan Bank in New York.

"Bank documents provided by both Swiss and HK authorities clearly established the transfer of funds from Escaler's HK Coutts bank account to Rosario's and Arceo's Swiss accounts," the prosecutors said.

The prosecutors said the respondents had made "no specific denial" about the money trail.

"If indeed Rosario and Arceo had no knowledge of, nor participated in the opening of the supposed escrow accounts, then how could they have effectively served as trustees for the amount supposedly held in escrow?" they said.

In the Senate, opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson welcomed the Ombudsman decision to pursue the case against Perez.

"Better late than never. Justice can wait so long as it's served properly. He's facing plunder charges, which is nonbailable. What would be interesting to watch out for are the personalities whom Perez would tag and implicate," he said.

Lacson said that it was reported that Perez got only $2 million, but the whole amount of the supposed bribery was $14 million. "So where's the $12 million?"

Former Bulacan Rep. Willie Villarama had said the $2 million was apart from the $14-million bribe for the approval of the Impsa contract. *With a report from TJ Burgonio*

Who is Mark Jimenez?

IN MAY 1998, BUSINESSMAN Mark Jimenez flew back to the Philippines with his family—just before he was charged before a United States District Court in Washington, D.C. with tax evasion and making illegal contributions to the campaigns of Bill Clinton and other Democrats in September of the same year.

He was indicted in April 1999, prompting the US Embassy to ask the Philippine government to arrest and extradite him. Before being extradited, he managed to win in 2001 a seat in Congress as representative of Manila's 6th District.

Once described by ousted President Joseph Estrada as a "corporate genius," Jimenez was Estrada's unofficial, unsalaried "presidential adviser on Latin American affairs."

He was extradited in December 2002 to the United States where he served two years and three months in prison. He returned to Manila in December 2005.

Since his return, Jimenez had been throwing around millions of pesos in donations to various groups, among them the distressed plan holders of the Pacific Plan pre-need firm who had organized themselves into the Parents Enabling Parents (PEP). He pledged P50 million to the group.

Born Mario Crespo, Jimenez left the Philippines in the 1980s, changed his name and made a home for himself in Miami, Florida, where he built a fortune selling computer parts in Latin America. *Inquirer Research*

TIMELINE

Nov. 12, 2002—Bulacan Rep. Willie Villarama, in a privilege speech, stops short of naming then Justice Secretary Hernando Perez as the "million-dollar" Cabinet member who allegedly accepted $2 million in exchange for the signing of the energy deal with Argentinian firm Industrias Metalurgicas Pescarmona C. A. (Impsa).

Nov. 13, 2002—Sen. Panfilo Lacson identifies the million-dollar man as Perez and says that not only $2 million but $14 million was deposited in his Hong Kong account. Lacson also admits that he and Villarama had Manila Rep. Mark Jimenez as their source of information.

Nov. 14, 2002—Perez and Villarama announce they had kissed and made up. Villarama says he did not identify the official in his speech because he lacked evidence.

Nov. 20, 2002—Villarama finally discloses in his speech before the Insurer's Club that Perez was really the one who accepted the bribe.

Nov. 25, 2002—Jimenez says during his privilege speech that Perez extorted $2 million from him in early 2001. Allegedly, the extortion happened in his home in the third week of January 2001 and was consummated on Feb. 23, 2001 after he wired the money to an account in Coutts Bank of Hong Kong.

He adds that the account details were given to him by businessman Ernest Escaler, who he claimed was fronting for Perez.

Nov. 26, 2002—Coutts Bank branch in Hong Kong informs Perez in a letter that it "[does] not have (nor ever had previously) any business relationship with" Perez. But Jimenez counters he never said the account belonged to Perez.

Nov. 27, 2002—Escaler calls himself "a professional investment and private banker" and clears Perez, who starts his 30-day leave of absence.

Dec. 7, 2002—Chief Supt. Reynaldo Berroya admits that he was also in Hong Kong in February 2001 and even had lunch with Perez and Escaler.

Dec. 18, 2002—Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo says the criminal investigation of the case will continue even if Jimenez has been turned over to the United States for extradition.

Jan. 2, 2003—A week after President Macapagal-Arroyo extended his 30-day leave, Perez resigns from his post.

Aug. 18, 2003—It is reported that the Swiss government is investigating Perez for money laundering. Perez in a phone interview says the Swiss government has no basis for doing the investigation.

July 19, 2005—A senior prosecutor at the Office of the Ombudsman says Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez was not acting on the bribery complaint against Perez. Gonzalez admits it took some time but says he had already turned over the documents to the Department of Foreign Affairs, which was to send the materials to the Swiss Embassy.

Oct. 11, 2005—It is reported that Overall Deputy Ombudsman Margarito Gervacio confirms that his office has been investigating Perez for possible violation of the antigraft law but that the probe "had to be discreet since there is still not enough evidence to go by to conduct a formal investigation."

Oct. 12, 2006—Ombudsman Ma. Merceditas Gutierrez promises Congress that she will resolve the plunder case of Perez, along with the case of former agriculture undersecretary Jocelyn Bolante, by 2007. *Inquirer Research*

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Who's who at summit

THE 10 ASEAN MEMBER-countries meet the leaders of China, Japan, South Korea, India, New Zealand and Australia at the regional grouping's East Asia Summit in Cebu, the Philippines, on Jan. 10-15.

The summit was originally scheduled for Dec. 11-13 but was cancelled due to a typhoon.

Here is an overview listing of the regional leaders who are attending, as well as this year's no-shows:

Asean dialogue partners:

- Wen Jiabao, prime minister of China
- John Howard, prime minister of Australia
- Manmohan Singh, prime minister of India
- Shinzo Abe, prime minister of Japan
- Roh Moo-hyun, president of the Republic of Korea
- Helen Clark, prime minister of New Zealand

Asean leaders:

- Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, president of the Philippines
- Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, prime minister of Malaysia
- Lee Hsien Loong, prime minister of Singapore
- Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei Darussalam
- Hun Sen, prime minister of Cambodia
- Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, president of Indonesia
- Bouasone Bouphavanh, prime minister of Laos
- General Surayud Chulanont, prime minister of Thailand
- Nguyen Tan Dung, prime minister of Vietnam
- Soe Win, prime minister of Burma (Myanmar)

Special guest:

- Jose Luis Guterres, foreign minister of East Timor. East Timor is attending as an observer and will sign the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia.

No shows:

- Ban Ki-moon, former South Korean foreign minister. Ban was invited by the Philippines, but will not be able to attend because he is settling in to his new role as secretary general of the United Nations.
- Burma's military leader, Gen. Than Shwe, who also failed to attend in 2005, is sending Prime Minister Soe Win in his place. Burma's ruling military junta, frequently criticized by Western governments, has come under pressure from fellow Asean members to speed up progress toward democracy. A Burmese Embassy employee in Singapore said Than Shwe had been receiving treatment at a hospital in the city-state.

He declined to give details of the leader's medical condition.

- Pascal Lamy, WTO Director General, who had been invited to brief regional leaders on the future of world trade talks but was unable to make the rescheduled event.
- Foreign ministers from Australia and Japan. Taro Aso of Japan will be away on a trip to Eastern Europe. Vice Foreign Minister Katsuhito Asano will attend instead. Alexander Downer of Australia is unable to attend due to a timetable clash. He will be represented by the Australian ambassador to the Philippines, Tony Hely.
- Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy of France, which was meant to accede to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia at the summit. First signed in 1976 with the goal of promoting peace and cooperation, the treaty has already been signed by non-Southeast Asian countries such as China and Australia.

Sources: Reuters, Asean (www.aseansec.org)

CEBU'S new landmark, the Cebu International Convention Center, draws local and foreign visitors. The facility is one of the venues of the rescheduled 12th Asean Summit.

TONEE DESPOJO/CEBU DAILY NEWS

Key issues at Asean's East Asia Summit

HERE IS AN OVERVIEW OF THE KEY ISSUES FOR the 12th Asean meeting and the 2nd East Asia Summit:

Counterterrorism:

- The 10 Asean leaders are expected to sign a Convention on Counterterrorism to prevent and help investigate attacks by militants in the region.
- The agreement would expand bilateral cooperation to track down, arrest, detain and rehabilitate the militants behind a series of deadly bombings in Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines.

North Korea:

- Asean seeks to play an active role in ending Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions. The Philippines offered to host six-party talks even before North Korea returned to the negotiating table in December.

Maritime security:

- Protecting vital sea lanes will be high on the agenda, as part of regional efforts to widen and strengthen cooperation on energy.

Biofuels/energy security:

- The 16 leaders from East Asia will sign a declaration on energy security that is expected to encourage greater use of biofuels, reduce the costs of renewable energy and reduce dependence on expensive crude oil.

Agreements on stockpiling fossil fuels and uniform biofuel blends across East Asia are not expected.

An EU-style community charter:

- Asean will agree on principles for the drafting of a charter this year that will turn the group into a rules-based organization more akin to the European Union. The leaders will agree to have the charter completed by the next Asean summit.
- Draft proposals call for sanctions, but not expulsion, for members who violate Asean's policies, which would be a major departure for an organization that prides itself on non-interference in members' domestic affairs.
- The proposals also call for majority voting rather than consensus in noncontroversial areas such as economic cooperation.

Acceleration of goal of Asean community by 2015:

- The Southeast Asian leaders will speed up the goal of an Asean community in security and sociocultural affairs to 2015 from the current deadline of 2020. The timetable for economic union had already been accelerated to 2015.
- The Philippines has championed social development in Asean and, under the theme of "One Caring and Sharing Community," the Southeast Asian leaders will sign declarations on the rights of migrant workers, women and children; protecting the environment; and fighting diseases such as HIV/AIDS and avian influenza.

Sensitive issues for informal discussions:

- Human rights abuses in Burma (Myanmar) and Thailand's military coup could also be taken up in informal discussions, officials say.
- Protesters in the Philippines have said they will spotlight such domestic issues as the country's political killings.

Source: Reuters

Polish archbishop quits over ties with secret police

From page A1

read from a letter to Pope Benedict XVI in which he offered his resignation "after reflecting deeply and assessing my personal situation."

Vatican spokesperson Rev. Federico Lombardi said Wielgus' past actions had "gravely compromised his authority" as one of the top Church officials in the deeply Roman Catholic homeland of the late Pope John Paul II. Lombardi said Wielgus was right to go "despite his humble and moving request for forgiveness."

The announcement sparked an uproar inside the cathedral and among the faithful massed outside. "They stoned the bishop!" an elderly woman outside shouted.

Although the Church had announced the resignation half an hour earlier, most of the congregation heard the news directly from Wielgus.

Met with applause

But in a sign of how the painful revelations have divided believers, Wielgus' words were also met with applause from those who attended the Mass—including President Lech Kaczynski, whose conservative party has sought both to purge Poland of the vestiges of communist influence and to strengthen traditional Catholic values.

John Paul II is widely credited in Poland with helping inspire the Solidarity freedom movement and the fall of communism 17 years ago. Since John Paul II's death, however, the country has grappled with a string of revelations about respected Catholic figures having cooperated with the secret services.

Still, none has rattled the country like the case of Wielgus, the highest-ranking Church official found to have agreed to cooperate with the secret police.

The disclosure was particularly troubling to many because it shook a widely held belief that the Church had acted as a courageous opponent of communism. Secret police agents not only spied on the Church, but also brutally murdered a young and charismatic Warsaw priest tied to Solidarity, Rev. Jerzy Popieluszko, in 1984.

Sat next to throne

After announcing his resignation, Wielgus removed his glasses and sat down on a chair next to the throne that would have been his had he remained archbishop. His predecessor, Cardinal Jozef Glemp, took the top seat instead.

Glemp, who is also Poland's primate, then delivered a homily defending Wielgus. He called him "God's servant" and warned of the dangers of passing judgment based on incomplete and flawed documents left behind by the communist authorities.

WIELGUS AP

"Today, a judgment was passed on Bishop Wielgus," Glemp said. "But what kind of judgment was it—based on some documents and shreds of paper photocopied three times over? We do not want such judgments."

Throughout the homily, Wielgus looked down, his mouth twitching and eyes batting shut repeatedly in apparent emotion. It was not immediately clear what role Wielgus might play in future.

"What he did was stupid, it was a mistake, but it was less harmful than what others did," said Barbara Matusiak, a 60-year-old doctor, outside the cathedral. "We don't know how we would have acted in his shoes, and so we have to forgive."

Others relieved

Others, however, expressed relief.

"If he was a spy, then he made the right decision to resign," said Teresa Sikorska, 58, who was selling souvenirs on the nearby Royal Castle Square. "How can you go to church and believe a man that spied on people? You can't."

Wielgus, previously the bishop of Plock, was named by the Vatican last Dec. 6 to replace Glemp, who stepped down after more than 25 years as archbishop. Allegations that Wielgus had been involved with the secret police were first raised by a Polish weekly last Dec. 20.

The case expanded into a crisis on Friday when a Church historical commission said it had found evidence that Wielgus had cooperated.

Wielgus initially denied the evidence, but then acknowledged that he did sign an agreement in 1978 promising to cooperate with the security force in exchange for permission to leave Poland to study in West Germany.

But he stressed that he did not inform on anyone or try to hurt anyone, and he expressed remorse for both his contacts with the secret police and his failure to be forthcoming from the start.

The Church said the Pope had asked Glemp to administer the archdiocese until a replacement was found.

Marek Zajac, a commentator for the respected Catholic weekly Tygodnik Powszechny, commended Wielgus for stepping aside, but said the move had taken too long.

"All of the recent perturbations and painful moments for the church—very dramatic and maybe dangerous for the future of the church in Poland—could have been avoided," Zajac said on TVN24.

'Pope saved us'

Polish media on Monday said the Pope had saved Poland and the Church by accepting the resignation of Wielgus.

"The Pope has spared the Church shame," "Rome came to the rescue" and "The Pope saved us" read the headlines in Poland's biggest daily newspapers.

"Rome's decision is a victory for conscience. We have renewed the basic governing principles, where betrayal again means betrayal, courage is courage and loyalty is loyalty," wrote the center-right Rzeczpospolita daily.

"The Polish Church was unable to resolve the Wielgus affair itself. Instead of condemning the betrayal, some bishops, priests and Catholic journalists hurled insults at those who had the courage to reveal this uncomfortable truth," Rzeczpospolita said.

Glemp also came under fire for speaking out in defense of Wielgus.

"Why did a man of such merit as the Primate undertake such a twisted defense of Wielgus, going against the truth and the advice of the Pope?" asked the conservative Dziennik daily.

The Pope has not yet personally commented on the scandal. He is scheduled later on Monday to deliver his "State of the World" address—a traditional New Year speech to diplomats accredited to the Vatican from more than 170 countries. *Reports from AP, AFP and Reuters*

RP assures Asian allies of vigilance against terrorism

From page A1

"Our fight against terror goes hand in hand with the global and regional effort," Ms Arroyo said.

"As we face the Asean summit, we would like to assure all our allies in East Asia and beyond that the Filipino soldiery and people are on watch every hour of the day, determined to do their share to defeat terror for a more secure and safer world."

The President said that the Cebu summit would see the region sustaining the momentum "in our collective fight against terror and in mopping up all forms of instability that affect the run of trade, cooperation and people to people solidarity in this part of the world."

Ms Arroyo said the Philippines was committed to continue to be a "strong player" in security and trade, in fighting poverty and building prosperity. "This is our commitment to the Filipino people and to all the peoples of East Asia," the President said.

Also yesterday, Director General Oscar Calderon of the Philippine National Police said that there were no specific threats against the summit. "There is really no threat in Cebu. Let's all go to Cebu and enjoy the area," he said.

Security force

The PNP has deployed some 6,000 policemen in Metro Cebu, augmented by 5,000 AFP personnel, PNP officials said.

Reynaldo Esmeralda, deputy director of the National Bureau of Investigation, said the NBI would be fielding 50 agents and forensic doctors to support the security operations in Cebu.

During the Jolo visit, Ms Arroyo also inaugurated a US-funded road project and a trauma hospital inside a military camp on the island, where US-backed Philippine troops have targeted Abu Sayyaf leaders and at least two top Indonesian terror suspects believed to be hiding in the jungles of Jolo.

One of those killed in Saturday's clash off Tawi-Tawi was a militant who goes by the single name of Gufran, a key aide of Dulmatin, a top Indonesian terror suspect wanted in the 2002 Bali bombings that killed 202 people, officials said.

Others killed in the clash were Filipino militant Judnam Jamalul, Abu Sayyaf member Abu Hubaida, two key aides of Abu Sayyaf chieftain Khadaffy Janjalani, and prominent Abu Sayyaf commander Abu Sulaiman.

Reward to civilians

Jamalul is among 17 Abu Sayyaf members wanted by the United States for attacks on American citizens. US and Philippine authorities had offered a P1-million reward for Jamalul's capture.

Lt. Col. Ariel Caculitan, spokesperson of the Marine Corps, said the reward would go to civilian informants. He declined to give details.

The militants tried to escape the ongoing offensive on Jolo when they were spotted by Marines, who engaged them in the firefight, Caculitan said.

Janjalani was reportedly killed in a clash on Jolo last September and troops recovered what were believed to be his remains last month. US forensic experts are helping verify the identity of the body using DNA tests. *With reports from Alcuin Papa, Dona Z. Pazzibugan and Margaux C. Ortiz*

No-fly zone declared over Asean summit venues

From page A1

the CICC, they were greeted by workmen still repairing and finishing up much of the interior.

With the front doors closed, cars were diverted to the basement, where security was nonexistent. Bags were not checked, and IDs were only checked at the front gate.

A number of countries still have travel warnings on Cebu, citing possible terrorist attacks, although the government said there were no valid threats against the summit, due to start on Wednesday.

The Philippine government cancelled the December summit citing the approach of a typhoon, following a series of travel warnings issued by a number of governments concerning the possibility of terrorist attacks.

Most of the furniture and decorations that were in place in December were removed shortly after the cancellation, and exhibition rooms were closed, architect Manuel Guanzon told Agence France Presse.

Repairs continue

The main entrance was bare and workmen could be seen repairing parts of the floor that was damaged when water leaked through the front doors.

But organizers said they were confident the work would be completed in time.

"We are just finishing putting in an air-conditioning unit for the ground floor and changing an exhibition hall into a meeting room for the summit," Guanzon said. "The workmen will be finished tonight."

As for the holes in the roof, he said they were repaired shortly after the cancellation. "The problem was that someone forgot to seal some glass panels," he said.

While the ministers and leaders will meet behind closed doors in the luxurious surroundings of the Shangri-La resort on Mactan Island, more than 40 separate meetings including the East Asia group will be held at the CICC.

With an AFP report

British missionary sent back to Hong Kong

SENATE MINORITY LEADER AQUILINO Pimentel Jr. yesterday protested the expulsion of a British missionary priest shortly after his arrival at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) to visit friends in southern Philippines.

"Are we now under martial law?" Pimentel said in a statement. "I denounce the fascistic treatment.of Fr. Frank Nally at the Naia. They held him upon his arrival Friday night and sent him back to Hong Kong Saturday morning without any reason."

He said that it appeared that the priest was on the watch list of foreigners barred from entering the country on suspicion that they would join protest rallies during the 12th Asean leaders' summit in Cebu this week.

He, however, did not discount the possibility that Nally was deported for other reasons.

"I suspect that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo did not want Father Nally coming to the country because he was here with British Member of Parliament Claire Short last July to look into mining operations in Mindanao and the extrajudicial killings," he said.

Nally was in the country to visit his former parishes in Mindanao as well as share Short's findings on mining operations and the spate of killings of leftist militants and journalists with his friends, according to the senator.

Pimentel also said the shameful incident betrayed the Arroyo administration's "insincerity" and "double talk" in inviting foreign observers to look into the human rights situation in the country in the wake of the killings.

TJ Burgonio

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, January 9, 2007
1st Week in Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Heb 2:5-12
Gospel: Mark 1:21-28

Jesus and his disciples went into the town of Capernaum and began to teach in the synagogue during the Sabbath assemblies. The people were astonished at the way he taught, for he spoke as one having authority and not like the teachers of the Law.

It happened that a man with an evil spirit was in their synagogue and he shouted, "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: You are the Holy One of God." Then Jesus faced him and said with authority, "Be silent and come out of this man!" The evil spirit shook the man violently and, with a loud shriek, came out of him.

All the people were astonished and they wondered, "What is this? With what authority he preaches! He even orders evil spirits and they obey him!" And Jesus' fame spread throughout all the country of Galilee.

Commentary

"Here I am and the children God has given me!" Jesus' prayer to God reveals that with Jesus we are given dominion over all things. But we have this dominion, this power of God in imitation of Jesus who has suffered death, trusted in God and proclaimed God's holiness. This Jesus begins his teaching. Are we spellbound by his words and authority?

There is a person who has an unclean spirit who recognizes Jesus. The unclean spirit shrieks at Jesus, afraid that it will be destroyed. Jesus rebukes it sharply, "Be quiet. Come out of the man!" Jesus' work is to bring us to our senses, not to destroy us, but to still our raging minds and souls and to teach us to live with dominion, under the power of God-in our own lives and with everyone around us. But we must obey the Word of God to know this teaching in our bodies and lives.

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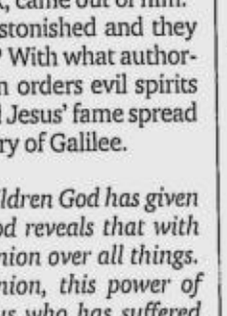

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Credibility

EDITORIAL

WILL THERE BE ELECTIONS IN MAY? THE answer to this question hinges on whether the Senate and the House of Representatives can come to an agreement on the P1.126-trillion budget for 2007. Chair Benjamin Abalos of the Commission on Elections recently expressed fear that the elections might not be held unless the proposed budget was passed. The new budget provides P4 billion for the holding of the elections.

There are two sticking points in the dispute over the budget: the P4.7 billion for the Department of Education's food-for-school program and the P400 million for the intelligence fund of President Macapagal-Arroyo. The Senate fears that the P4.7 billion could be diverted for campaign purposes and proposed that it be realigned to help solve the shortage of classrooms and teachers. The Senate also fears that the P400-million intelligence fund of the President would be used for political purposes and is proposing that it be realigned to the Department of National Defense.

The senators have reason to fear that the two outlays would be used for campaign purposes. The memory of the use of P728 million in fertilizer funds supposedly to buy votes in 2004 is still too fresh to be forgotten. The Arroyo administration also used other public funds, such as that of PhilHealth, for political purposes.

A compromise might be reached on the P400-million intelligence fund, leaving the food-for-school fund as the major issue to be resolved. Ostensibly the objective of the program is laudable: it calls for a daily ration of rice for Grade 1 pupils from poor families to encourage them to attend their classes. The stated objective of the fertilizer program was also laudable, but in practice the fertilizer doles were used for patently political purposes. Many probably still remember that congressmen in urban districts, which had no farms, were given sizable fertilizer funds.

Malacañang wants the food-for-school fund retained, and said that the President would use her veto power if the Senate would junk the outlay. A compromise solution was proposed by Sen. Ralph Recto who urged that the P4.7-billion school feeding outlay be retained but that the program be carried out in June to avoid suspicion that the funds would be used for electoral purposes.

We believe that the Senate and the House will find a way out of the impasse and pass a new budget by February. The reelectionist senators and congressmen will be among the first to insist that the 2007 budget be passed so that the national elections could be held. Neither the politicians nor the people would allow a no-election scenario. The government would have a revolution on its hands if no elections are held this year.

If the new budget is not passed, Congress could always pass a supplemental budget of P4 billion for the holding of the elections. So it seems that funding for the elections is one of the least of the worries of the government. What it should be worried about is the credibility of the coming elections.

The automation of the elections would help enhance the credibility of its results, but unfortunately both the administration and the Comelec dragged their feet on this project. The Comelec recently said that it was no longer prudent to automate the May 14 elections for lack of time, and even the opposition agrees with this.

Ideally, the credibility of the elections would be greatly enhanced if the three "old" Comelec commissioners would voluntarily resign and be replaced with new appointees of proven integrity and honesty. The three senior commissioners are tainted with charges that they conspired with the Arroyo administration to change the results of the 2004 presidential election. They are also allegedly involved in the voided P1.3-billion poll automation contract. The records are all there in the Office of the Ombudsman and the Supreme Court for everyone to see.

The priority undertaking now would be to revamp the Comelec to restore public confidence in this constitutional body that is supposed to protect the people's vote and ensure its accurate and faithful reporting. At the same time, the people will have to take measures to ensure the integrity of the ballot by revitalizing such organizations as the Namfrel and the PPCRV. Everybody agrees that this year's elections are crucial in ending the long-drawn-out political crisis. More than about the funding for the elections, all stakeholders in our republic should be concerned about the credibility of processes and institutions.

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Vital threshold

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

"LIFE IS THE THRESHOLD AT WHICH ALL other hopes begin." And Health Secretary Francisco Duque is talking of how this threshold is surging, seen in our lengthening life expectancies.

In the mid-1940s, life was "nasty, brutish and short" with life expectancy at 47 years. Today, it is 70 years, "due to a shift to a healthier lifestyle," the secretary says. DDT spraying after World War II, in fact, stamped out malaria, helping to lengthen lives.

"We've surpassed Thailand's life expectancy of below 70," the secretary went on. Thus, more Filipinos will, in William Butler Yeats' haunting image, "comb grey hair." The Human Development Report 2006, in fact, reveals that Filipino life expectancy today is 70.2 years. It is 69.7 years for Thais.

A pity Secretary Duque's comparison skips the international context. He also didn't bring out the stark disparities between provinces.

Singaporeans can look forward to 79 years of life. And the Japanese golfer, who tees off here, will probably outlive his Filipino caddy by 12 years. That gap shows what is possible. "That a man's reach should exceed his grasp/ Or what's a heaven for?" Browning once asked.

Life expectancy for Pampangueños and Cebuanos is now 72 years, the Philippine Human Development Report reveals. But people in Tawi-Tawi, Sulu and Maguindanao are handcuffed to life spans that, at 52, are almost a generation shorter. In between these extremes are people in Kalinga, Apayao, Quirino and Antique—62 years is within their reach.

These "fault lines" mirror the skewed distribution of wealth and power and strangehold over resources by a miniscule elite. The richest 20 percent in Metro Manila, for example, consume 45 centavos out of every peso. Mostly huddled in the slums, the poorest 20 percent try to make do with 8 centavos.

Poverty is a "state of powerlessness, and not merely the lack of assets and services to meet the most basic of needs." And chronic hunger spawns lethargy, apathy and ill-health so widespread that they're taken for granted. Also, horizons of the rich rarely extend beyond their "gated enclaves." The rich man's line of sight, the parable tells us, blotted out Lazarus scrounging for crumbs at his gate.

Affluence guarantees this elite food, medical care, shelter, education, clean water and sanitation, aside from summer homes, second cars and trips abroad. These add-on years of life, prompting many to ask: Does wealth vest a franchise to life on the few?

We must learn to see these dry-as-dust figures for what they really are: sentences to early deaths for helpless men, women and children. Many never get to thresholds "at which all other hopes begin."

"Differences in homes, clothing, schools or even diets are galling enough," the late National Scientist Dioscoro Umali told the Asia Society in New York. "But denial of life and premature graves constitute an obscene injustice ... and cuts into the depths of our common humanity. They vest the cries for justice with the pent-up force of suppressed anger. We will reap the whirlwind if we persist in sowing the wind this way."

This denial of life probably is seen most vividly in what Duque frets about: "the increasing number of maternal deaths, specially in rural areas." Out of every 100,000 deliveries here today, he reports, 270 Filipino mothers die. This is six times the maternal death rate of Thailand, which is 44.

Why this stark difference? Far too many Filipina mothers resort to untrained *hilots*, the secretary said. The DOH is therefore introducing maternity packages. These could steer pregnant women to local health centers, which often are short of medicine, or government hospitals, which invariably are overcrowded.

You deliver a baby in Thailand today, 9 out of 10 you'll have skilled health personnel in attendance, according to UN human development indicators. That slumps to only 6 out of 10 in the Philippines. Are we seeing here part of the bill for mass migration of our doctors, nurses or midwives?

Thailand's smaller population has a higher per capita income. Yet, Bangkok spent $260 per capita of its GDP for health. We penny-pinched at $170. No wonder, 99 percent of Thai kids are fully immunized against TB. Compare that to 58 percent for Filipinos. And will Thais, in the future, be taller than Filipinos? Out of every 100 Filipino school kids, 32 are stunted, compared to 13 percent for Thais.

Clean water and sanitation are the most cost-efficient means for whittling death rates, says the UNDP study, "Beyond Scarcity." Some 99 percent of Thais have access to improved sanitation, but only 72 percent of Filipinos do. In Cebu City, 38 out of every 100 households tap into water supplies of neighbors because of its obsolete municipal system and collapsing aquifers.

The litmus test for those seeking elections in May is what they can do about premature deaths now that will make a difference later. The operative word is "now." "Tomorrow is a postdated check. But today is cash."

As those deaths show, we are a country of great needs. We need models of limited wants. Surely, fewer deaths for Filipino mothers and children is within our reach. We have the resources, the technology, the human skills to ensure that the "threshold where all other hopes begin" need not close. But who has the backbone?

(Email: juanlmercado@gmail.com)

The issue will be GMA

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

MIKE DEFENSOR HAS A FEARLESS FORECAST. The May elections, he predicts, will be Round 3 of the GMA-Erap fight. "It's too early to say what our chances are, but we are confident that once the public realizes that this is all about Arroyo and Estrada, it would understand the issues more and not be carried away by the anti-GMA rhetoric."

It's a clever ploy, but it won't work. The billing of the elections as the third round between GMA and Erap is, of course, a not-too-subtle reference to the so-called "grand finale" of the Pacquiao-Morales rivalry some months ago, with its attendant associations. Pacquiao won the third match, GMA will win the third match. What can I say? The Palace spin doctors are earning their keep.

The billing of the elections as GMA vs. Erap is as well a throwback to the ploy GMA used against FPJ in 2004, which was to put the opposition on the defensive. Presidential elections normally have the incumbent as the issue: how well he or she has run the country. In the 2004 elections, the main challenger—Fernando Poe Jr.—became the issue. It was a clever ploy, and it is a testament to the paucity of talent in the opposition that it never managed to get out of that bind. To this day, I cannot fathom why it was never able to draw the voters' doubts about, if not revulsion, to GMA, given in particular that she had vowed she would not run but did, which was a character-defining moment.

That is clearly Malacañang's tack all over again: turn Erap, and not GMA, into the issue.

I must admit that isn't helped any by pictures suggesting so. Such as that group picture of the United Opposition that appeared on our pages last Saturday. That has Erap written all over it. It plays right into the administration trap.

I have suggested in several columns before that the forces opposing the current illegitimate government produce more Alan Peter Cayetanos, or indeed completely new faces, non-politicians who have done magnificently in other fields and are known to be reasonably honest, to range against the administration candidates. Good vs. Evil is always better than Evil vs. the Lesser Evil. I refuse to call it a "third force" because that suggests there are already two other (major) forces locked in contention. I propose to call it "the real opposition." I have suggested this in the past, and my only caveat to it now is that it be done fast. Really fast; the elections aren't that far away.

But even without this, I doubt that Malacañang will be able to divert the voters' attention, or indeed opprobrium, away from GMA all over again. At the very least, you see that in the lack of enthusiasm of the administration candidates being vigorously endorsed or worse—since it leaves an indelible image in the public mind—having their arms raised by their boss. It is not a gift of life, it is a kiss of death. The administration candidates might as well be saying, "We'll take the cash, never mind the credit."

There is a basic difference between the May 2004 and May 2007 elections, and it has nothing to do with the fact that the one was presidential while the other is senatorial. It has everything to do with the fact that during the May 2004 elections, GMA was still a legitimate president while after that she was not. In May 2004, despite the protestations of the Erap camp that GMA stole the crown from Erap, most Filipinos regarded GMA as the rightful president, a legitimacy bestowed upon her by a hallowed tradition, which was the tradition of People Power. After the "Hello Garci" tape, despite the protestations of the GMA camp she won the elections anyway despite that breathtaking act of fraud, most Filipinos saw GMA as having stolen the vote and wielding illegitimate power, one that has spawned the most humongous iniquities, not least of them runaway murder, in this country.

The issue of GMA's illegitimacy remains an incendiary one, and it will be the central issue in the May elections. The surveys bear that. But more than surveys, the public will have a powerful reminder of it in Virgilio Garcillano running for congressman in Bukidnon. I am one of those who truly, deeply and sincerely welcome the fact that he was cleared of any wrongdoing by the Department of Justice in the dead of Christmas, while our thoughts were turned to peace and love, and that he is running in these coming elections. It shows only the kind of justice this country might expect from its pseudo government and what the administration ticket represents in the coming elections.

I do not know if Garcillano will petition the Comelec to count any vote for "Hello" and "Garci" in his favor, but I do know that the opposition (and I truly hope it is the real opposition) will need only to produce posters or placards of Garcillano with the words "Hello Garci" to remind the voters of what these elections are all about. They are not about GMA fighting Erap, they are about GMA coddling Garci.

There is one last thing to remind voters of the issue of illegitimacy. That is that after Jan. 20 this month, GMA will be the longest-serving president in this country after 1986. Again, I have to say that the only thing that is correct about the phrase "longest-serving president" is longest: She has neither served nor is she president. After Jan. 20 GMA will be the longest occupant of Malacañang after Marcos, with the dubious distinction of never having been voted into that office. That cannot be lost on the voters this May, particularly with Garci there to drive home the point.

As in 1971, after the Plaza Miranda bombing, even a dog will win against a Malacañang candidate today, at least at the senatorial level. But the question is, can we count the votes right?

That is the biggest rub of all.

Some forces bringing RP to political Stone Age

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

A RECENT ARTICLE IN THE INTERNATIONAL Herald Tribune titled "Why America can't just walk away," by Brent Scowcroft, who served as national security adviser to former US Presidents Gerald Ford and George H. W. Bush, reminded me of a parallelism in the Visiting Forces Agreement now bedeviling our country. Scowcroft argued that a sudden pull-out from Iraq, as what some opposition elements in the US are pressing in the face of 3,000 young American boys dead, would be "a strategic defeat." He said that as America works its way through this "seemingly intractable problem in Iraq, we must constantly remember that this is not just a troublesome issue from which we can walk away if it seems too costly to continue." What is at stake is not only Iraq and the stability of the Middle East, he stressed, "but the global perception of the reliability of the United States as a partner in a deeply troubled world. We cannot afford to fail that test."

* * *

Similarly, our reliability as a modern nation is at stake in the raging controversy involving US Marine Daniel Smith. Militant elements as well as some people who should be more responsible argue that we should put "national interest" above all else in batting for justice for a Filipina perceived to have been wronged, and junk our international commitments under a treaty this country willingly signed. The Left wants the VFA scrapped unilaterally. But there are those who think otherwise and who argue that we have to honor our international commitment for as long as the VFA, defective as it is, is in force, because what's at stake is our reliability and trustworthiness as a treaty signatory. That some supposedly responsible elements would urge us to renege on this commitment shows how small-minded and parochial some of us have become.

Some forces are bringing us to the political Stone Age, seeking to isolate the Philippines from the rest of the world, instead of taking its rightful place in the family of nations. To quote Scowcroft, "we cannot afford to fail that test."

* * *

The House of Representatives should pay attention to the stand of the Employers' Confederation of the Philippines on HB No. 345, which gives a three-year, across-the-board daily wage increase of P125 for all private-sector employees. ECOP is composed of private employers with about 12.2 million wage and salary workers, including some 5.7 million employed in over 800,000 companies in the formal sector. Terming the bill "completely irresponsible and devoid of any economic sense and logic," and passed under "questionable circumstances" just before adjournment, ECOP said the P1.2 trillion needed to fully implement the legislated increase, over and above the existing payroll, would wreak havoc on the economy. The wage increase would trigger a spiraling cost-push inflation and massive unemployment, since it would force SMEs to close shop and more formal-sector outfits to go "underground," the group said. It would worsen the wage-competitiveness of RP in the Asian region, where it already has the highest minimum wage rates.

What Congress ought to do, ECOP said, is see how RP labor's productivity and competitiveness, already the lowest in the region, could be increased. There's no question that our workers need help in tackling the upward surge of prices of goods. But Congress should hold more public hearings on this issue, as it might cause more harm than good to the workers in the long run.

* * *

Each year's beginning is a good occasion to remember those who journeyed to the Great Beyond in the old year. One was Gen. Cesar Nazareno, our mistah from PMA Class '61, who bridged the transition from the Philippine Constabulary under the AFP to the new Philippine National Police. Cesar, 68, was the last PC chief and the first PNP director-general and much of his long PC career was spent in Mindanao. Late last year, he succumbed suddenly to massive cerebral hemorrhage, which came as a shocker as he looked trim and healthy. Cesar left behind his wife, my Holy Ghost College schoolmate Dolly Nazareno, who regaled all her guests during the wake with anecdotes about her husband, their four sons and a daughter, and their six grandchildren. At Cesar's funeral at the Libingan ng Mga Bayani's generals' row, an AFP chopper scattered petals over his gravesite, as the slowly-thinning and aging ranks of Class '61, led by Sen. Rodolfo Biazon and class president Nicasio Rodriguez, former Air Force chief, stood at attention. It was the kind of tribute he doubtless relished.

* * *

Aptly on Dec. 30, 2006, Rizal Day, a good man, Dr. Felixberto Sta. Maria, went home to his heavenly reward after a lingering illness. As former president of Far Eastern University, Sta. Maria inaugurated a full-blown cultural program that included the renovation of its splendid auditorium. Before that, he was at the University of the Philippines as head of the English department, where I was a student in the late 1950s and early 1960s. I have to confess that the very good grade he gave me in Comparative Literature helped put my mother, who was among the UP's first women graduates, at ease about my seriousness in my studies. Later, Sta. Maria became dean of the College of Arts and Sciences for many years, and then of UP Baguio. After his retirement, he indulged in his favorite hobby: painting in oil of old churches. An exhibit of his paintings was very much applauded by Anding Roces, himself a man of letters.

Highly regarded for his competence and integrity and gifted with a keen sense of humor and wit, Sta. Maria was much loved by his students. He was also greatly respected by his colleagues who admired him for being a faithful husband, a devoted father and a true and zealous disciple of Christ. Which is more than one can say of a lot of academics nowadays.

A bastardized Festival

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

BEFORE THE MANILA FILM FESTIVAL WAS created by Manila Mayor Antonio Villegas, Filipino movie fans could watch Philippine-made movies only in flea-bitten provincial theaters, second-run theaters in the metropolis or a few cinemas owned by local producers, like Life Theater in Quiapo. The rest of the movie theaters, especially the air-conditioned cinema palaces along C.M. Recto Avenue and Avenida Rizal, as well as newer, swankier theaters like New Frontier in Cubao (with its newfangled escalator) and Rizal Theater in Makati, were devoted exclusively to Hollywood movies.

Movie-going in the 1950s and 1960s was determined by social class—the moneyed and the educated middle class watched movies in English in air-conditioned comfort, while the lowly classes who loved local films contented themselves with stuffy rundown facilities. As they made their way noisily up and down the wooden steps, the moviegoers' wooden sandals (*bakya*) created quite a racket, leading National Artist for Film Lamberto Avellana to thank the "*bakya* class" for providing a market for his films.

But Avellana's fond tribute soon created a new term: "*bakya*," meaning tasteless and tacky, with connotations of poverty and provincialism. And the great divide between "classy" Hollywood movies and "*bakya*" Filipino films would have remained intact had it not been for "Gatpuno" Villegas and the Film Festival he created.

Villegas made political capital out of his rabid nationalism, and while his more ridiculous innovations, such as bestowing on himself a "native" title like "Gatpuno" or calling an underpass a "*lagusnilad*," have become mere funny footnotes, the MFF (since evolving into the MMFF or Metro Manila Film Festival) remains an enduring institution.

* * *

PERHAPS it rankled the mayor that he couldn't even watch a Filipino movie in any of the huge carpeted and chandeliered cinemas in the city he governed, since film distributors believed, wrongly, that anyone with a modicum of taste would not be caught dead paying to watch a Filipino film.

Or maybe Villegas knew that many well-off and discerning Filipinos shared his taste for local movies, including masterpieces like those that Avellana and his contemporaries like Gerry de Leon and Eddie Romero created, as well as more commercial fare that nevertheless reflected local realities and spoke direct to the heart of any Pinoy. With the stroke of a pen, Villegas decreed that for a certain period (I'm not sure if it was originally meant to coincide with the Christmas season) all movie theaters in Manila would show nothing but Filipino movies.

To justify such a protectionist measure that resulted in restraint of trade, Villegas required that the movies participating in the Festival measure up to certain artistic and, yes, nationalistic standards, such as the promotion of Filipino culture and values. If I remember right, a panel was empowered to screen the entries and make sure they measured up to the standards. Then all the participating movies competed with each other not so much for the box-office take, which was considered superfluous since any movie in the Festival was bound to make money, but for the prestige of the awards.

* * *

I WON'T say that the Festival alone led to the "Golden Age" of Filipino movies in the 1970s, when young directors like Lino Brocka and Ishmael Bernal began making movies that blew all of us away. But I don't think you can ignore the role that the Festival played. Because producers had to come up with "quality" and "artistic" movies to qualify for the Festival, they were more willing, come Festival time, to give projects to ambitious directors with "concept" movies, since the pressure of commercialism was lifted for the duration of the Festival.

The Festival also had the corollary, if largely unintended, result of opening the eyes of an entire generation of young Filipinos to the greatness and potential of Filipino movies. Forced to finally shell out a few pesos for native fare, since their hunger for Hollywood could not be assuaged during the Festival, most colonial-minded moviegoers suddenly discovered Filipino cinema. No longer was watching local actors talking in Tagalog and living out Filipino themes and realities cause for embarrassment or chagrin.

And as this also coincided with the blossoming of nationalism that erupted during the First Quarter Storm, watching Filipino movies became a matter of pride and obligation and in many cases, that pride and obligation resulted in quite satisfactory, and even uplifting experiences.

The "*bakya*" class had been joined by the perfumed set.

* * *

WE may never see another confluence of such factors again: a burgeoning nationalist movement, producers competing for prestige and not profit, and filmmakers daring to break free of commercial formula.

We will certainly never see that coming to pass with the way the MMFF has since evolved, with its organizers proudly, even brazenly proclaiming that the main intent of the Festival is to earn money. We have certainly gone a long way from the days of the Gatpuno's nationalistic and artistic aspirations to the 2006 edition in which the jurors and the organizers considered box-office results the main (if not the only) criterion for excellence.

I agree with MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando's assertion that the only winner will be "Hollywood" if the MMFF's critics' cries for its abolition are followed. But the MMFF's continued existence, especially in its current bastardized form, is a tacit admission that, despite 30 years of special treatment, our native film industry has failed to develop or even keep up with the times. We might as well begin reading the obits.

Kicking the oil habit

WORLD VIEW

Volker Perthes and Friedemann Müller

CHANCELLOR ANGELA MERKEL HAS MADE addressing climate change a high priority on Germany's agenda for its European Union and G-8 presidencies that begin in January. Here is a concrete proposal, one general enough for world leaders to consider and accept, and clear enough for other governments and businesses to grasp: simply set a date, at the next G-8 summit, by which oil-powered cars would no longer be licensed in major industrialized countries.

Such a decision would have a strongly positive economic and geopolitical impact. The real cause of today's worries over energy is not the decline in world oil reserves, but rather that domestic oil production by the top consumers—Europe, the United States and China—will decline at the very moment that growing Asian demand strains the market. Available reserves will increasingly be concentrated in the Middle East simply because supplies in all other regions will be depleted sooner.

Moreover, the main oil exporters are unwilling to subordinate their investment policies to market requirements. Saudi Arabia seeks to run its oil production independently, while Iran scares off potential investors with bureaucratic hurdles and corruption. Iraq suffers from a lack of security, and foreign investors in Russia are thwarted at every turn. Those four states contain half of the world's proven oil reserves and two-thirds of what could potentially be exported. All this, not production costs, lies at the heart of high oil prices and the scramble for oil contracts in Central Asia and Africa.

To believe that high oil prices are good because they serve the environment ignores some basic facts of international politics. First, in many of the poorest African and Asian countries, oil imports account for a significantly higher share of national expenditure than in industrialized countries, which means that economic growth and social development are being imperiled, while new debt crises loom.

Rents from oil production impede reforms in the major exporting countries. Thanks to their lubricated financial strength, regimes like those in Venezuela and Iran increasingly feel unconstrained by international rules. Latecomers among consuming nations, such as China, mimic the former habits of the industrialized West, with their long record of overlooking human rights abuses in order to secure lucrative deals with authoritarian, oil-rich regimes.

Only the world's political and economic heavyweights, the main industrialized countries that remain by far the biggest consumers of hydrocarbons, can initiate change on a global scale. Change must begin in the transport sector, which accounts for more than half of current oil consumption—a share that is likely to rise in the future.

The G-8 countries should therefore agree to no longer license any new, oil-powered cars from 2025 onwards. This decision would not be directed against individual mobility, but against the dissipation of a scarce resource that is more urgently needed to produce synthetic materials.

Political leaders should not privilege any particular technology. Instead, they should provide the automobile industry with incentives to develop alternative technologies that rely on bio-mass fuel, ethylene, hydrogen and even natural gas during a transition period. Countries that lead the way politically will, as a collateral benefit, provide domestic industries with a leading position in energy technology, ensuring future markets.

The expected significant reduction of CO_2-emissions could eventually bring about the breakthrough that is needed in international climate policies. But economic development comes into play as well: curing our "addiction" to oil would leave more of it to poorer, less developed, and newly industrializing countries, as well as pushing down prices and easing geopolitical energy competition.

Geopolitically, the benefits would be similarly obvious, as the ability of major oil exporters to blackmail industrialized countries would be significantly reduced. This could increase the bargaining power of the international community in the Middle East, and might strengthen those social forces in countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran and Russia that seriously wish to promote political and economic reform from within.

As a technologically advanced and major automobile-producing country, Germany is well placed to bring about such an initiative. Merkel, who holds a doctorate in physics and started her political career as an environment minister, presiding in 1995 over the first conference of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, may have more credibility in addressing the issue than any of her EU and G-8 colleagues.

Now is the time for a bold act of leadership.

Project Syndicate

Volker Perthes is director of Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), the German Institute for International and Security Affairs. Friedemann Müller is a senior fellow at SWP and an energy policy expert.

Cold pragmatism?

YOUNG BLOOD

Chuckie Perez Manio

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

THEY TRAINED TO BECOME ACCOUNTANTS, MANAGERS, leaders. They had vowed to take the world by storm. Most of them work at call centers now.

I've seen some of the smartest young people of my generation abandon what they term as their "stupid, idealistic dreams" and instead go practicing their accents, forcibly inserting a twang into their English, answering banal questions with exaggerated enunciation and reciting prepared spiels for eight hours a day.

It doesn't sound like fun, but you wouldn't know from looking at them. They all seem so happy. Check the posters, and you see everyone beaming and looking fine, clutching at a book and wearing smart, casual attire. They think they're winners, working at a cool-sounding company such as Convergys and earning loads of money for talking while wearing cool headphones and sitting on comfortable computer chairs.

And they even have an excuse to hone their accents and use slang such as "dude" or "bro" all day as if they grew up in the West. And maybe, one day, they might log in enough hours to convince everyone that they have forgotten their native language. Then they can speak English all day and smirk at the befuddled expressions on the faces of others who might overhear them speaking. And then they would smile as they watch their social stock rise.

Oh, call centers are wonderful, sure. They're saving our floundering economy and providing work for thousands of Filipino graduates. It's not so bad, I guess, to work in a call center and earn P20,000 a month just for talking all day, something many of us do simply for fun. Many Filipinos speak decent English, and it looks as if all of them are salivating at the prospect of "learning" an accent so they can be quickly hired.

But call centers can be picky. They want people with college degrees, and everyone know that college diplomas do not come cheap. A four-year management course at a decent private university would cost a total of P200,000, not counting the books, allowances and miscellaneous expenses. Just to work at a call center. I repeat, a call center. It's hardly a good a deal for any young man or woman.

I think the basic problem with call centers is our understanding of it. We've misinterpreted this kind of job, believing it to be glamorous, something to be dreamed of, when it should be simply a stepping-stone to bigger and better things. What we fail to see is that while P20,000 a month may be a good starting salary for people who live with their parents, it's not enough to raise a family on. And because of very limited mobility in the industry, that's all you'll probably ever get while you are in it.

And don't tell me about how your company promotes their employees to managerial positions. There will only be a handful, and most likely they won't be you, and if it is, great, that makes one of you.

Our country is falling apart and thousands of college graduates are wasting away at home scouring the classified ads. Our only plan for salvation is to rely on call centers. And that calls for the continuation of our rotten educational system. Learn English and earn a P20,000 job. That's a steep price to pay for one's ignorance and learning to parrot language skills. But then again, it's just me talking.

Maybe our priorities are misplaced. Instead of cultivating talent and shaping promising young men and women into creators and innovators and pillars of their communities, we are nipping young buds who are about to bloom, training an army of brain-dead drones to speak a foreign language with an accent. Rather than teach in one language and concentrate on mathematics and the "hard" sciences, we teach in two languages and graduate batch after batch of inept English speakers destined for mediocrity. Instead of producing thinkers, leaders, writers and scientists, we set loose upon the world servants and flunkies, wiping the sweat off doctors' faces and cleaning some foreigner's backside. Not a fair trade, I think.

Today, it's quite fashionable to discard idealism and espouse cold pragmatism, the attitude you need in the "real world," they say. Everyone seems to fold the second they hit that age where everything suddenly becomes so clear to them and suddenly they realize that life isn't what they thought it to be. Then they are afraid to dream, and they tell themselves there is no other choice but to work in a call center.

Disillusionment. It hits hard and some people can't handle it. Life is hard—everyone knows that. But why should we accept such horrible conditions and allow our lives to go by without giving anything back to this world, or maybe even just to our country? Should we simply go with the flow and bow to reality, no matter how bad it may be instead of trying to change it?

Living isn't easy. It is so tempting to opt for a happy but mediocre life and the sane thing seems to be to accept that reality and give up all those foolish dreams you thought of when you were still young and you knew so little about the world and its ways. But things aren't always perfectly sane. Where would we be without the romantics, the lunatics, the fools with crazy, pointy hair, devising all sorts of irrational things, things that make us human and make this world a bit more livable? Where would we be without dreams and ambitions? Where would we be if all we ever wanted in life is to get by safely, living and dying with a muffled whimper?

I don't know. And I don't want to find out.

Chuckie Perez Manio, 19, studies at De La Salle University-Manila.

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THEY SAID

A dog's life

"It's all about giving dogs a certain quality of life. We're not going to give up just because Andy's old ... not as long as I have the energy, time and money."

—Aya Ashiya on pampering and caring for her beloved pet "Andy," a Siberian husky

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Will Filipinos learn from the Hussein story?

IT SEEMS IRONIC THAT IN IRAQ, SADdam Hussein was captured, tried, judged guilty, allowed one appeal and shortly thereafter, executed; while murderers, thieves, economic saboteurs in other countries enjoy long lives on death rows, in jail or worse are allowed to thumb their noses at the judicial system.

In the Philippines, we have lawyers who use every ploy and legal maneuver in the book to prolong the lives and/or ensure the freedom of convicted criminals who have been sentenced to death or life imprisonment. We have a system of appeal after appeal for those who have committed heinous crimes to the point that our justice system has become laughable. Perhaps, we should take an example from Iraq and allow our convicted felons to enjoy the same swift application of justice.

In 2001, Imelda Marcos was arrested and charged with corruption and amassing wealth illegally during her husband's regime. She was convicted of some of the charges and sentenced to a maximum of 12 years in prison. This conviction was later overturned. How in heaven's name the conviction was overturned is anybody's guess. She still faces many corruption-related charges. Unfortunately, the wheels of justice grind ever so slowly in our country where the wealthy and the powerful reign absolute and supreme, even for those who have lost power like Imelda.

A newspaper columnist once wrote: Imelda is often batty, occasionally inspiring and disarmingly charming. She lives in a dreamworld. She claims to be a penniless widow, while clicking a button for servants in a Manila penthouse cluttered with masterpieces by Picasso, Michelangelo, Gaugin, priceless antique statues of Buddha and gold, gold, gold.

She is unrepentant about the millions she spent on a 21-year shopping spree. "Yes, I bought those things for my country, only the best," she says with a defiant air. "It is shallow people who think beauty is frivolous or excessive. If you are bringing beauty and God, you are enriching the country. Rice feeds the body, books feed the mind, beauty feeds the soul. It is one thing I can really be proud of and stand tall in the world."

If the Philippine government is unable to make charges against her stick, I am certain it will be much easier to put her away in an institution staffed not by a jail warden and corrections officers, but one that is surrounded by psychiatrists and psychologists.

It might be worthwhile if we allowed the events leading to Saddam's execution to teach us, the Filipino people, an equally valuable lesson. The entire series of events was thorough, swift, fair and final. Saddam was given his legal day before the Iraqi bar of justice with one final appeal; his lawyers had every opportunity to fully defend their client's legal rights.

If our justice system were on a par with that recently demonstrated in Iraq, Imelda Marcos and powerful, corrupt and abusive individuals like her might have a greater fear of the death sentence applied in a similar swift, fair and final manner. Perhaps with real fear of quick application of the law and the corresponding penalties, there would be less propensity for graft and corruption and for abuse of power, about which we read every day.

—BUNNY ARVILLE, rarville@cox.net

New Year resolution: Contentment, hard work

ANOTHER NEW YEAR BEGINS, SIGNALing a new life—and change, the only permanent thing in this world, a fact that every year we prove to be true as we gear ourselves up for major changes in our lives with our New Year's resolutions.

A New Year's resolution is a commitment people make in order to attain a desired goal. The pursuit of the goal normally starts during the New Year's Day and lasts until the goal is achieved.

But what is the best New Year's resolution?

Based on a recent survey conducted by Pulse Asia, 42 percent of Filipinos say that the best New Year's resolution is hard work; 12 percent say it is love for humanity; the remaining 46 percent offered different answers.

In my opinion, it's self-contentment and hard work. There will be significant change if people are contented with what they have—there will be less crime and there will be peace. And with hard work, people can easily improve their lives.

But if we really want change, if we really want to be a better person, why wait for a new year?

—JOWI TSIDKENU CRUZ, jowitsidkenucruz@yahoo.com

LETTERS

Not the first caper in the dead of night

CONVICTED RAPIST, US MARINE Daniel Smith, is now a fugitive; and the US Embassy, in collaboration with the Arroyo regime, is harboring a criminal. We call on the workers and the people to make a citizen's arrest of Smith and reclaim justice for Nicole and the nation.

As is the norm in this illegitimate regime, the sudden transfer of Smith (from the Makati jail to the US Embassy) took place in the dead of night, just like the railroading of constituent assembly, the passage of the R-VAT and the proclamation of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as President, among others. These crimes were perpetrated by those in power while the people were sleeping. Worse in the Smith caper because the Filipinos were celebrating the holidays: GMA the Grinch stole Christmas and justice from Nicole and the nation.

America is acting as the Big Brother and GMA is doing her role as the little brown sister in this reality show featuring America's imperialist arrogance and Ms Arroyo's shameless puppetry. US colonial rule supposedly ended in 1946, but how come the US Embassy can acquire custody of Smith in contravention of a trial court's decision that has been affirmed by the Court of Appeals—a decision ordering the convicted rapist to be kept in the custody of Philippine authorities.

The Subic rape case and the illegal transfer of Smith's custody are the best arguments against the Visiting Forces Agreement. The workers demand its immediate abrogation. The VFA is an affront to Philippine sovereignty. It abets the United States' aggressive imperialistic designs worldwide.

—JUDY ANN MIRANDA, Partido ng Manggagawa, 5 Matyaga St., Barangay Central, Quezon City

Bullying people with contrary views

IT IS HARD TO HOLD FAST TO A personal belief in this country and even harder to express it if it runs contrary to those of Rina Jimenez-David, Evalyn Ursua and groups like Gabriela and Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption (VACC). They are quick to renounce anyone whose opinion and action may not be favorable to them. They label those who disagree with them as "shameful and treacherous," "anti-women," "anti-Filipino" or with "colonial mentality."

David chided justice and foreign affairs officials for surrendering Philippine sovereignty to the Americans when all they did was affirm the existence of the Visiting Forces Agreement. What was so treacherous about that?

If an agreement is really in conflict with Philippine laws, then David should blame the people who entered into it. The Senate might have to be included because it ratified the VFA.

But why are David et al. complaining only now? As one columnist puts it, "to change the rules in the middle of the game is cheating." An agreement, until it is repealed, must not be disregarded, not even to suit the needs and caprices of "Nicole."

In reaction to US Ambassador Kristie Kenney's remarks that US Marine Daniel Smith was not just a private citizen but a member of the US military, David said that Smith's presence ("drinking and dirty dancing" as she described it) was a letdown to a "higher standard of behavior." What about Nicole's? What was she doing there at that time of the night in the first place? It is unfair to cast doubt on Smith's behavior and not do the same on Nicole's.

I would like to think that unlike the Gabriela members, David has no political agenda. She may have been carried away by an honest commitment to the cause of women's rights, but she must be able to distinguish between an honest and dishonest accusation regardless if it comes from a man or woman.

All men and women are capable of wicked acts. To right away take the side of any woman who cries rape would not do the cause of women's rights any good. This is not to say that every woman who complains of rape is telling a lie. It is a fact that many rape cases take place in motels designed in such a way that women taken inside have no way out.

If Ursua was correctly quoted as accusing members of the Justice for Daniel Smith (JDS) as "financed by the US Embassy," she has to prove that; otherwise, she is a disgrace to the law profession. A lawyer who makes unfounded accusations, speaks in spiteful language, and engages in boorish behavior is inept, to say the least.

Writers like David, and lawyers like Ursua, as well as their allies, must not resort to bullying tactics by calling those who do not share their views all sorts of names. Such style is unprofessional and unexpected of those who stand for the truth. In fact, such style may be the truly shameful acts.

—PETE D. ADAPON, 52 Yugoslavia St., Better Living Subdivision, Bicutan, Parañaque City

Bringing in millions of medical tourists a fantasy

"GOV'T EXPECTS TO ATTRACT 20-30M medical tourists, [in the next five years]" an INQUIRER news story last Dec. 26 had this headline. The people behind this fantastic estimate should be the first to have brain surgery here.

With just over 2 million tourists each year, even a tripling of that number because of "medical tourism" is pure fantasy. Their projection is just way, way off.

—PETER LAVINA, peterlavina@gmail.com

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Why not the world?

– Lea Salonga

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Cop chief sacked over leftist killing

BUTUAN CITY—THE POLICE CHIEF OF SURIGAO CITY HAS been sacked for failing to solve the two-month-old murder of a leftist labor leader by a suspected military death squad there.

Chief Supt. Antonio Nañas, police chief for the Caraga Region, said PNP chief Director General Oscar Calderon has ordered the relief of Chief Insp. Virgil Ranes for his failure to solve the killing of labor leader Roderick Aspili.

"This is in line with the policy of the Chief PNP with regards to unsolved political killings," Nañas said.

Aspili, an organizer for the Nagkahiusang Mamumuo sa Surigao del Norte (United Workers of Surigao del Norte), an affiliate of the militant Kilusang Mayo Uno, was watching television with his family inside their house in Barangay Trinidad when he was shot by one of four bonnet-wearing men believed to be members of a military death squad.

14th victim

He became the 14th victim of attacks against militants in the region.

But Surigao City Mayor Alfonso Casurra protested the relief of Ranes.

Casurra, who insisted that the death of Aspili was not political, branded the relief as unfair for a police officer who "delivers" so much in terms of the city's peace and order.

"He kept a high crime efficiency rate and succeeded in maintaining the city's peace," Casurra said.

"Definitely there are people who really like to place their men because the election is coming, simple as that," Casurra added.

He said he and the city council had already asked Calderon to reconsider his decision but to no avail.

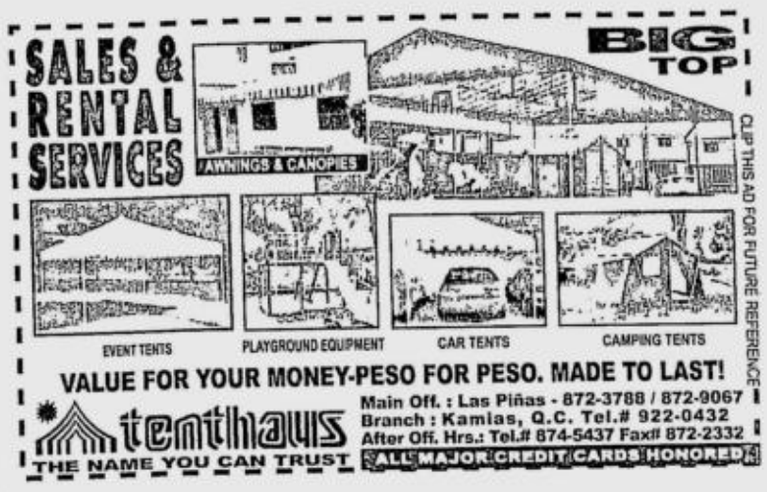
Casurra said he would not exercise his right to choose who a replacement for Ranes from among five policemen recommended by the PNP.

Trust, confidence

"I will not exercise my option to choose among the five police officials recommended to replace Ranes because in the first place I still have trust and confidence in him," he said.

Analyn Lumawag, spokesperson of the militant human rights group Karapatan-Caraga, said the sacking of Ranes did not constitute justice for the family of the slain activist.

Franklin A. Caliguid, Inquirer Mindanao



Ilocos cops tag Army exec suspect in militant's slay

BAGUIO CITY—THE POLICE HAVE IDENTIFIED an Army official as a suspect in the 2005 murder of a coordinator of the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines in the Cordillera and Ilocos.

In a forum on Monday, the Cordillera Human Rights Alliance presented a copy of the report of the San Esteban police in Ilocos Sur identifying Capt. Joel Castro of the 50th Infantry Battalion as the main suspect in the murder of Jose "Pepe" Manegdeg in that town.

Lawyer Randy Kinaud, secretary general of the Cordillera Human Rights Alliance, said a witness had identified Castro as the one who allegedly shot and killed Manegdeg.

Kinaud said the witness, whom he did not identify, said Castro was accompanied by five other men during the attack.

Manegdeg was shot and killed on Nov. 28, 2005, while he was waiting for a bus ride at 10 p.m. along the national highway in San Esteban.

Manegdeg had worked with tobacco and rice farmers in the Ilocos and vegetable farmers in the Cordillera.

Kinaud said the CHRA obtained a copy of the police report last month while preparing documents on cases of human rights violations in Northern Luzon.

The police report said Castro was formerly assigned with the military intelligence company of the 50th IB.

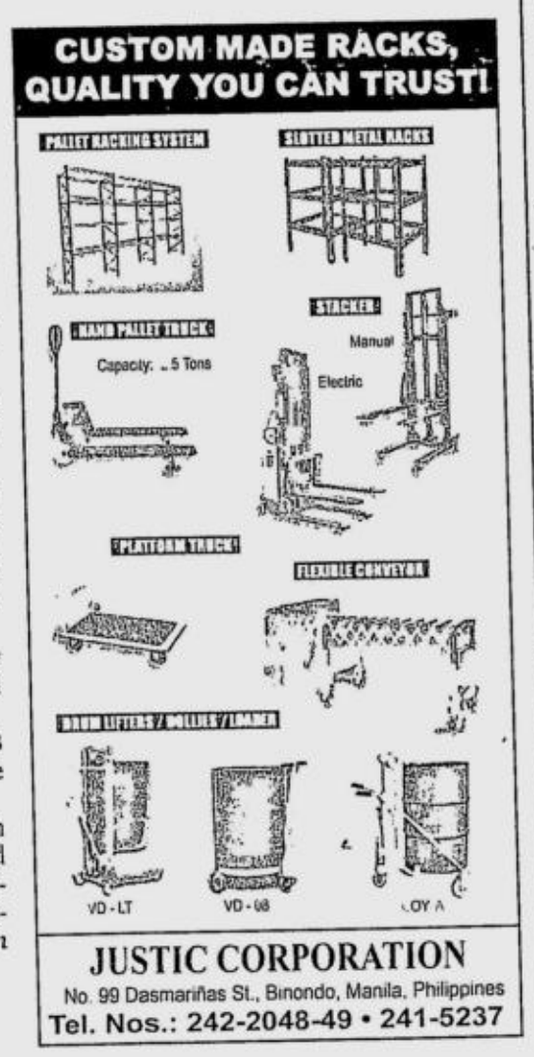
Kinaud said they were grateful for the courage of the witnesses who provided facts crucial to the identification of the suspect.

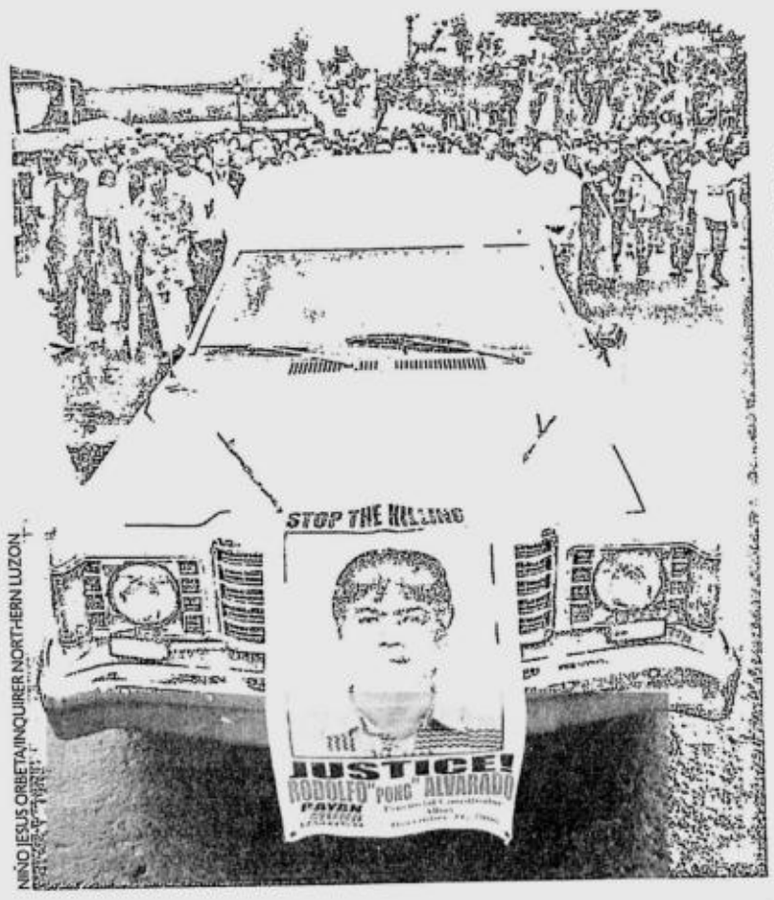
"We also commend the police for releasing the report. Their findings validate our earlier claim on who were responsible for the death of [Manegdeg] and debunked a malicious report that he was set up and killed by the people he had worked with and by communist rebels," Kinaud said.

The CHRA said Castro should be presented by the military and his commanding officers should also be held liable for Manegdeg's murder.

The INQUIRER tried to reach the 50th IB commander through his mobile phone but the call went unanswered on Monday.

But Maj. Ferdinand Razalan, spokesperson of the military's Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom), said the Nolcom welcomed any investigation that may be initiated against Castro. *Desiree Caluza, Inquirer Northern Luzon*





NINO JESUS ORBETA/INQUIRER NORTHERN LUZON

RELATIVES, friends and supporters of slain Bayan Muna coordinator Rodolfo Alvarado transform his funeral into a protest action against continued killings of leftists allegedly by government hit men. Alvarado's killing, according to Bayan Muna leaders, was intended to paralyze the party-list group to prevent it from getting a seat in the House of Representatives.

Burial of slain leftist leader turns into rally

LEGAZPI CITY—YESTERDAY'S BURIAL OF THE Bayan Muna provincial coordinator in Albay who was shot dead on Dec. 31 was also a major protest rally by militant groups, which demanded that the military answer for the killing.

"Dugong inutang ng militar singilin, singilin! Pagbayarin ng dugo!" yelled at least a thousand protesters wearing white Bayan Muna T-shirts while the remains of Rodolfo "Ompong" Alvarado was being carried from the church to the Ligao City Catholic Cemetery.

Alvarado, 53, was shot dead inside his car while on his way home in Barangay San Lorenzo in Ligao City.

Bayan Muna party-list Rep. Satur Ocampo said the killing of Alvarado was, in a sense, an election-related violence.

"National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales repeatedly declared that they want Bayan Muna to be disqualified in the elections but since they do not have any basis to file a petition for its disqualification, they resort to physical elimination and terrorism," Ocampo said.

He said the spate of political killings had a very clear pattern, indicating that it was well organized, well-funded, and that they had become part of a systematic policy of exterminating the basic leadership structure of Bayan Muna and other militant organizations.

Earlier, Senior Supt. Roque Ramirez, Albay police director, said a witness in the killing of Alvarado was now in police custody and that a police task force was created to investigate.

Ocampo said Bayan Muna does not believe the Melo Commission would be impartial in its investigation of the killings of leftists.

"What's happening is, we don't see the commission unearth evidence pointing to the government as the one responsible for the killings," Ocampo said.

Alvarado's eldest son Carlo, in his speech after the Mass, described his father as a very supportive man.

He asked Alvarado's supporters not to grieve over his father's death.

"Let's work for peace," he said, crying.

He added that his father had every option to hide or run away but simply told him, "How could I serve the people if I run away and not fight? The people need a voice, I would give my life to them." *Ephraim Aguilar and Niño Jesus Orbeta, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

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P6M in smuggled pork to be buried in Tarlac

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE —At least 41,535 kilograms of smuggled pork from China that were seized during a raid on a cold storage plant in Mexico, Pampanga, last year, are scheduled to be buried at a sanitary landfill in Capas, Tarlac on Wednesday.

However, the owner of the contraband, estimated to be worth P6 million, has not been identified, lawyer Ronnie Silvestre, district collector of the Bureau of Customs' Port of Clark, told the INQUIRER on Monday.

The consignee, Arnold Polintan, did not show up during the hearings despite efforts to summon him, Silvestre said.

Officials of the Kayabe Cold Storage and Ice Plant submitted copies of receipts showing Polintan had rented two storage facilities starting May 2006.

Silvestre said the police's Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, which led the raid, was conducting a separate investigation of the liability of the company.

Police sources said the illegal cargo, packed in four freezer vans, belonged to the 11 freezer vans smuggled through the Port of Manila in June 2006.

The smuggled meat shipments were suspected to be infected with the foot-and-mouth disease. Agriculture officials declared these unfit for human consumption.

Police and industry sources suspected that the four vans would be delivered to two Pampanga-based meat-processing companies. Officials of those firms had denied owning the cargo.

The CIDG supposedly has video footage of evidence of ownership, but this has not been submitted to the BoC, Silvestre said.

He said the shipments seized in the Kayabe raid and the four freezer vans of smuggled pork, chicken and mackerel that officials in Sta. Rita and Guagua towns rejected on Nov. 10 were "entirely different loads," citing the conflict in dates of delivery.

The Kayabe cargo was inventoried by Port of Clark customs personnel, he said, in reaction to reports reaching Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez that CIDG men failed to conduct a proper inventory.

Gonzalez has asked the National Bureau of Investigation to conduct a separate investigation, especially of reports that half of the cargo was sold in local markets.

As of Monday, NBI personnel had not tried to reclaim the Kayabe cargo or hold the condemnation procedure.

Silvestre admitted delay in the condemnation schedule of the Kayabe cargo, saying his office took time raising the P431,000 tipping fee at the Kalangitan landfill and agriculture officials have yet to provide enzymes that would speed up the decaying process.

Kayabe, he said, pitched in P85,000 as tipping fee.

Dr. Romeo Manalili, officer-in-charge of the Department of Agriculture's regulatory division in Central Luzon, said his office has not been informed about the cargo condemnation.

Capas Mayor Reynaldo Catacutan said he was not aware of the plan and insisted that the local government be consulted because the landfill fell within the local government's jurisdiction.

"That [plan] should go through a long process of consultation," he said. *Tonette Orejas, Inquirer Central Luzon*

MILF protests police linking of 2 guerrillas to bomb attacks

COTABATO CITY—THE MORO Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has accused government troops of violating a truce for tagging two MILF leaders in Friday's bomb attacks here.

MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu told the INQUIRER that policemen violated a provision in a three-year ceasefire agreement that says "government troops must not make any pronouncement that would hamper the peace process, unless officially filled with their Coordinating Committee on Cessation of Hostilities."

"We already filed a protest. Definitely, it will not help in the peace process. It rather rocks the volatile situation of the peace talks," Kabalu added.

The explosion, that injured three people, was caused by an improvised explosive device fashioned out of a 60 mm mortar shell.

Two unexploded bombs were also recovered near the blast site.

Police said that based on intelligence information, MILF commander Said Pakiladato and his deputy, Ustadz Hawon, were responsible for the explosion that occurred outside a refreshment parlor along the busy Makakua Street here.

Pakiladato has also been tagged as the mastermind in the 2003 explosion that killed Datu Piang Mayor Saudi Ampatuan.

"We are protesting because this is a clear violation in our ceasefire. Any statement that would hamper the peace process is prohibited," Kabalu said.

The MILF earlier said that Pakiladato and Hawon had no hand in Friday's explosion here and in other attacks blamed on them by authorities. *Jeoffrey Maitem, Inquirer Mindanao*

Wall stirs suspicions of tunnel existence at Subic

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC Zone—Residents reported the discovery of a large concrete wall in Sitio Tangos at the Redondo Peninsula within the Subic Bay Freeport during earth moving work there on Sunday.

They believed the wall could lead to a tunnel of an underground military facility formerly used either by the Japanese or United States military, reports reaching the INQUIRER showed.

The South Korean company Hanjin is constructing a shipbuilding center on the peninsula.

One of the residents, Ruben Canlas, told the INQUIRER that his brother, a worker at Hanjin, saw the concrete wall on the way to work. It is as tall as a three-story building.

A landslide bared the wall, Canlas said. Out of fear of what may be behind the wall, Canlas said the backhoe operator working in the area left in haste.

"Military men were seen securing the site because they might be thinking that treasures are hidden there or it could be a door to a tunnel," he said.

Canlas said old residents recalled that Tangos, a part of Agusuhin in Barangay Cawag in Subic town, used to be a hiding place of Japanese soldiers during World War II. Later, American troops based at then Subic Naval Base across Redondo used Tangos as well as Kinabuksan as a firing and bombing range.

In the 1970s to 1980s, base workers reported seeing jets flying and disappearing over Redondo, fueling speculations of an underground facility there.

US Navy officials did not confirm those reports, though.

Those reports were mentioned in the book, "The Bases of Our Insecurity," by University of the Philippines professor and anti-nuclear activist Dr. Roland Simbulan.

Jose Calimlim, senior deputy administrator of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority, said he sent Col. Jaime Calungsad, chief of the SBMA law enforcement department, to check out the discovery of the wall.

"So far, the initial report was negative. Perhaps, the discovery is being concealed from us. But I asked a team to continue looking," Calimlim told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

He said the area used to be a firing and bombing range by the US forces. Since 1999 and under exercises held under the Visiting Forces Agreement, US Marines come yearly to Sitio Kinabuksan for war games. *Tonette Orejas, Inquirer Central Luzon*

GUARDED MOMENT NINO JESUS ORBETA/INQUIRER SOUTHERN LUZON

Residents of Guinobatan, Albay on Friday wait in line for relief goods being distributed by government officials. The people of the town were some of the hardest hit by mudslides from Mayon Volcano and floods wrought by Supertyphoon Reming.

Middlemen to have less role in veggie trade

LA TRINIDAD, BENGUET—THE province's vegetable industry appears headed to a fruitful year as it stands to become the first beneficiary of the government's decision to reduce the role of middlemen in the trading of vegetables.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap said President Macapagal-Arroyo already gave the go signal to test the opening of several markets in Metro Manila where Benguet farmers could directly sell their harvests.

"Our target is profitability. If we want to help the farmers, the first thing to do is to help the farmers earn more profit," Yap said.

He said that farmers are losing much since middlemen control the flow of the vegetable trade.

Cabbage is bought from farmers at P4 a kilogram but it is sold in Metro Manila from P25 to P30 a kg while carrots are bought at P15 a kg but sold at P20 to 25 a kg, Yap said.

"That's why we have now an intensive market program for farmers that the President wanted to be implemented," he said.

"*Puro tayo* (We focus too much on) hunger statistics. We should help farmers enter the markets," Yap quoted Ms Arroyo as saying.

Yap bared the market program for farmers before nine Benguet mayors at the Commonwealth Market in Quezon City on Sunday.

On Jan. 13, Benguet farmers will begin to supply vegetables at the Commonwealth Market, a move that drew applause from La Trinidad Mayor Nestor Fongwan, Benguet Mayors' League president, and from officials of the Benguet Farmers Federation Inc.

Under a marketing arrangement to be closely monitored by the Department of Agriculture, the farmers, through the BFFI and the Bad-ayan Buguias Development Multipurpose Cooperative, will deliver the market's need of 20 to 30 tons of vegetables daily.

Fongwan said the Commonwealth Market could yet become another major delivery point of vegetables aside from Balintawak in Quezon City and Divisoria in Manila.

The farmers, he said, could also hit pay dirt in the Commonwealth Market because Barangay Commonwealth has a big market of 1.7 million people, the biggest of all the country's villages.

The market has an area of 17,000 square meters and a vegetable *bagsakan* (drop off) area of more than 5,000 sq. m.

Yap said the other markets that will be opened for Benguet vegetables are the Mutya ng Pasig (Pasig City) and Kadiwa Center (MacArthur Highway, Valenzuela) on Jan. 19, Muntinlupa public market (Muntinlupa City) on Feb. 2, Family Market (Valenzuela) on Feb. 9, New Las Piñas Market on Feb. 16 and the Agora public market on Feb. 23. *Delmar Cariño, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

Army says it captured top NPA leader in Negros town

By Carla P. Gomez
Inquirer Visayas

BACOLOD CITY—THE MILITARY arrested yesterday a leader of the New People's Army (NPA), one of the 30 most wanted in the country, and his security escort, in Siaton, Negros Oriental.

Lt. Col. Norman Flores, 61st Infantry Battalion, identified those captured as Raul Villar, alias Ka Drilon, and Villar's security escort, Francisco Mahilum, alias Ka Jong Jong.

Villar, who carries a reward of P800,000, is a platoon leader of the NPA Larangan Gerilya 5 that operates in the hinterland of southern Negros.

He has a pending warrant of arrest for robbery with multiple homicide, in connection with the 2001 payroll robbery and killing of five municipal employees of Santa Catalina town in Negros Oriental.

Flores said soldiers from the 61st Infantry Battalion captured the two after receiving information from residents of Sitio Kabankalan, Barangay Tayak in Siaton about the presence of two persons engaged in extortion, Flores said.

Under disciplinary action

He said Villar is a former member of the Revolutionary Proletarian Army-Alex Boncayao Brigade who defected to the New People's Army after he was placed under disciplinary action for his alleged involvement in criminal activities.

Two M-16 assault rifles with magazines containing ammunition were recovered from the two suspected rebels.

Col. Gregorio Fajardo, 303rd Infantry Brigade commander, said the capture of Villar is a big setback to the leadership of the Komiteng Rehiyonal Negros, considering that he is among the original CPP cadres and a battle-tested platoon leader of the New People's Army in southern Negros.

Police records also indicated that Villar has been listed as among the 30 most wanted persons in the Philippines, with a cash reward of P800,000 for his capture.

Military and police intelligence operatives have been tracking down Villar who commanded a platoon-size guerrilla unit after his defection to the New People's Army in 2001.

Flores said he expects some of Villar's followers to surrender after his capture.

Showdown looms between JDV, Dagupan mayor in polls

DAGUPAN CITY—A SHOWDOWN between Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. and Mayor Benjamin Lim in the congressional race in Pangasinan's fourth district loomed after the name of Lim's son floated as the likely mayoral candidate here in the May elections.

But Lim said he is still consulting his political leaders and representatives of various sectors on his plans.

"I have been getting encouragement from many of our local leaders in the district, mostly [from those] outside Dagupan, telling me that there has to be an alternative candidate in the district," Lim told the INQUIRER.

This city and the towns of Mangaldan, San Fabian, San Jacinto and Manaoag belong to the fourth district where De Venecia has been representative since 2001.

Lim was also elected representative here in 1998 but he gave way to De Venecia in 2001 and ran instead for mayor.

"I may take that challenge in time. Right now, my concentration is in the city. We can make our final decision on or before the deadline for the filing of candidacy," Lim said.

Local political analysts and radio commentators said a Lim-De Venecia face off would push through because Lim had been openly criticizing the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

He is also the only Pangasinan mayor who called for Ms Arroyo's resignation in 2005. He joined the protest actions against the Charter changes being pushed by administration officials last month.

On the supposed mayoral candidacy of his 28-year-old son, Bryan, Lim said everything was speculation.

He said his son finished a management course in the United States and just earned his law degree.

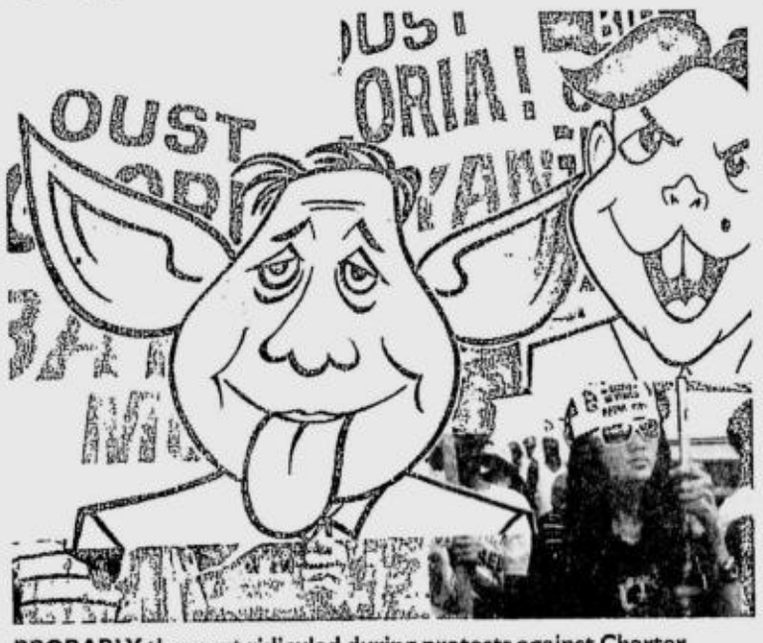
He said his son, who studied at the Boston College in Massachusetts and at the Ateneo de Manila University, is reviewing for the bar examinations.

"I don't want to impose upon him what he wants to be because that is something that I don't do to my family," Lim said.

But Lim said he had invited his son to Dagupan "for him to understand the kind of job that I do for the city and maybe, from there, make his own decision."

"He should go around and talk to the people, make his own observations, talk to the leaders and find out for himself if politics is his cup of tea. If it's not, how can I insist?" Lim said.

If Lim's son decides to run for mayor, he will be facing Vice Mayor Alvin Fernandez, son of Immigration Commissioner Alipio Fernandez Jr., who is a staunch De Venecia ally. *Gabriel Cardinoza, Inquirer Northern Luzon*



PROBABLY the most ridiculed during protests against Charter change, Speaker Jose de Venecia's face is caricatured in a placard carried by protesters during a rally in Manila. He faces a new challenge in his home province. RAFFY LERMA

Dirty water from Samar flood strikes 140 people ill

By Joey A. Gabieta
Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—AT LEAST 140 people in flooded towns in Northern Samar have been taken ill due to diarrhea that health authorities said could be one of the effects of the flooding.

Of the four towns in the province that have been confirmed to have diarrhea, the town of San Roque registered the highest number of cases at 80, said Dr. Fidelita Dico, assistant coordinator of the health emergency management service of the regional Department of Health.

Boyd Cerro, regional health sentinel nurse, in a separate interview, confirmed that there were more diarrhea cases in San Roque town. Dico and Cerro went to the province last week to investigate.

Dico said diarrhea cases were also reported in the towns of Mondragon, Silvino Lobos and Catarman.

Dico said the number of cases was expected to rise as many cases have not yet been reported to the health office.

Water sources

Sources of drinking water have been contaminated as a result of the floods.

People in the towns get their drinking water from open wells and springs.

Cerro said health authorities distributed solutions to fight dehydration among those stricken with diarrhea and chlorine to clean water.

But authorities are running out of the two items. Cerro said the health office has 1,000 sachets of Oresol, the antidehydration solution, and 30 kg of chlorine.

Cerro urged people to boil their water before drinking.

The province of Northern Samar has experienced massive flooding due to continuous rains in the last week of December.

The provincial government, under Gov. Raul Daza, earlier declared six towns in a state of calamity on Friday.

The municipalities of San Roque, Pambujan, Catubig, Mondragon, Silvino Lobos and Catarman experienced the worst flooding among the 24 towns of the province.

Worst in Northern Samar

At least 12 people were dead in the floods and 12,000 families were displaced.

The Department of Public Works and Highways in the region also reported that several roads and bridges were destroyed by the waters.

Daza said the floods were the worst to hit Northern Samar. Waters reached 12 feet deep in some areas.

A WEEK of continuous rains weakened this spot on a national road in Maplag town, Southern Leyte. The rains also brought flooding to several towns in Northern Samar and displaced thousands of people. At least 12 people were reported dead and scores of others were ill after drinking water that got contaminated as a result of the floods.
DENNIS JAY SANTOS/INQUIRER MINDANAO

Swollen rivers worsened the flooding.

Rains also caused flooding in Southern Leyte. Three villages in the town of Sogod were under water, displacing 80 families.

Rains in Samar and Leyte lasted for a week, damaging infrastructure that, in Northern Samar alone, were estimated to be worth P51.8 million.

In Southern Leyte, authorities reported at least P10 million in damages to roads and bridges.

The regional Department of Agriculture reported that at least P11 million worth of crops were destroyed.

Jennylyn Almeria, head of the operations division of the regional DA, said Northern Samar suffered heaviest damage at P9.2 million in at least 2,479 hectares of croplands.

Leyte lost P1.8 million worth of agricultural products to flooding in 557 hectares of agricultural lands.

Gloria opens bridge that took 6 years to finish

LINGAYEN, PANGASINAN—President Macapagal-Arroyo opened on Saturday the 600-meter long Domalandan Bridge which took six years to complete.

Ms Arroyo said the bridge was a fulfillment of her promise that she made 11 months ago to complete the bridge this year.

She said it took long to complete the bridge, which was destroyed by floods in 1999, because there was no money for its construction.

But it was only last year when the collection of the expanded value added tax was implemented and when there was enough money that "I could afford to keep my promise," she said.

The bridge costs P745.4 million, almost double its original contract price of P407.5 million because of inflation.

Its original construction schedule was from Jan. 29, 2001 to April 24, 2002 but lack of funding extended its completion to this year. The national government has released the project's budget by installment.

Ms Arroyo said no foreign loan was used to complete the bridge.

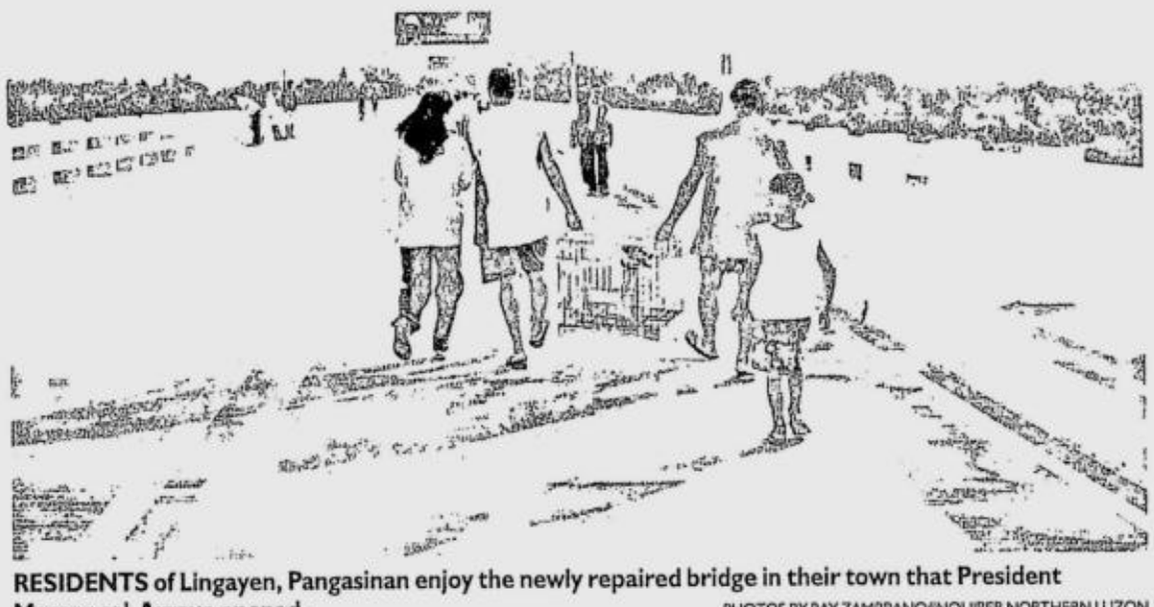
"This is a happy day for us. The Domalandan Bridge has risen again," said Gov. Victor Agbayani.

It was his father, the late former Gov. Aguedo Agbayani, who built the original bridge in 1972.

Agbayani said the bridge would reduce travel time from Lingayen to western Pangasinan towns by 30 minutes. Without the bridge, motorists will have to pass by Bugallon town on their way to western Pangasinan.

The bridge, which traverses the historic Limahong Channel, "will promote efficient movement of people, goods, and services in the province," a project brief said.

Ms Arroyo, in her speech, said the country was "off to a good start this year and we are confident that 2007 is the year when all come together." *Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, Inquirer Northern Luzon*



RESIDENTS of Lingayen, Pangasinan enjoy the newly repaired bridge in their town that President Macapagal-Arroyo opened.
PHOTOS BY RAY ZAMBRANO/INQUIRER NORTHERN LUZON

MS ARROYO rides a pickup to cross the bridge in Lingayen, Pangasinan that she just opened.

ROUNDUP

P1M lost in Bulacan fire

MARILAO, Bulacan—At least P1 million worth of property went up in smoke during a fire that hit a school in Barangay Lias here on Sunday. Investigators of the Bureau of Fire Protection said the fire broke out at 2:10 p.m. at a building housing computers of the AFG Bernardino Memorial Trade School and spread to the machine shop. No one was hurt, reports said. In Bocaue town, two stalls selling firecrackers and pyrotechnic products in Barangay Turo were razed after an explosion triggered a fire on Saturday. Police said no one was hurt during the 35-minute fire that started at 1:45 p.m. Investigators said a "whistle bomb" lighted by a store attendant fell on a pile of firecrackers kept in the stalls owned by PMP Fireworks. Investigators placed damage at P400,000.

Carmela Reyes, Inquirer Central Luzon

US donation to ARMM courts

COTABATO CITY—The US Agency for International Development (USAID) gave books, computers and other equipment to local courts in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. In a statement, the USAID said the donation was made under its Rule of Law Effectiveness (ROLE) Activity program. The program, in coordination with the Philippine Judicial Academy, provides basic training and seminars to judges and court staff in the ARMM to improve their skills in processing cases and disputes.

2 hurt in land dispute

COTABATO CITY—Two shooting incidents allegedly triggered by a land conflict in North Cotabato and Shariff Kabunsuan left two persons in critical condition, the military reported on Wednesday. Lt Col. Onting Alon, public affairs division chief of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said one of the victims, farmer Miranda Mamaluba, of Pikit, North Cotabato was wounded when he fought back a group of unidentified armed men who were harassing him. The arrival of government militiamen forced the attackers to withdraw. In Barira, Shariff Kabunsuan, a militiaman, Kaadanding Faisal, reportedly shot and wounded Akmad Lininding over a land dispute in Barangay Nabalawag. Soldiers of the 38th Infantry Battalion, to which Faisal belongs, have been tasked with serving a court order for his arrest.

Charlie C. Señase, Inquirer Mindanao

Fire razes 2 houses

COTABATO CITY—At least two houses owned by Muslim clerics in Barangay Poblacion Mother here were razed by a fire on New Year's Day. Police said the 20-minute fire of still unknown origin destroyed property worth P250,000. No one was hurt in the fire that gutted the houses of Omar Lao and Danny Bagundang, according to Senior Insp. Samson Obatay, city police spokesperson. It was learned later that Lao had the house rented to three traders engaged in the selling of firecrackers and pyrotechnics.

Charlie C. Señase, Inquirer Mindanao

Bus rams truck; 3 dead

CEBU CITY—Three people were killed while 16 others were injured when a bus rammed a parked cargo truck Sunday along the national highway in Barangay Macaas, Catmon town, 57 kilometers north of Cebu City. The victims were passengers of the D' Rough Riders bus, which was bound for Cebu City from Daanbantayan town. Catmon police identified the fatalities as Narciso Caycay, of Tindog, Medellin; and spouses Virgilio and Maria Rosario Maloloy-on, of Maya, Bagay, Daanbantayan. PO1 Roy Hortelano said the injured victims were brought to the Damulog District Hospital in nearby Sogod town. It was not yet known why the bus driver, Ranel Peñas, failed to see the truck.

Jhunnex Napallacan, Inquirer Visayas

Salary increases vowed

DUMAGUETE CITY—Some local government units in Negros Oriental have assured their employees of higher pay once the national government orders the implementation of a salary increase for government workers. Gov. George P. Arnaiz said the provincial government had already set side some P20 million for the possible salary increases of some 1,700 employees. The projected savings of the province last year was P70 million, he said. Dumaguete Mayor Agustin Perdices also promised that the 1,300 City Hall workers would receive their pay raises should there will be an order from Malacañang to that effect.

Romy G. Amarado, Inquirer Visayas

'Buddha' owner heirs seek share of Marcos loot

By Delmar Carino
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—A COURT DECISION rendered here last year that declared a Golden Buddha existed is expected to boost the chances of the heirs of the statuette's finder in claiming a share from the $25-million Marcos assets held by a German bank in Singapore.

Lawyer Edgar Avila, counsel for Rogelio Roxas' sons Henry and Gervic, said he will file a formal claim for damages once the money being held in escrow by the Philippine National Bank gets past all its legal hurdles.

But Avila said the Roxases' share from the deposit would represent the family's damage award as human rights abuse victims of martial rule and not as compensation for the Golden Buddha's seizure.

"The pay for the Buddha's unlawful seizure is still the subject of litigation before [American] courts," he told the INQUIRER on Wednesday.

Avila said the Roxas heirs must assert their claim after lawyer Rod Domingo, counsel for the Marcos human rights victims, offered on Jan. 2 that the $25 million be split between human rights victims and the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG).

The Singapore-based West Landsbank, however, refused last week to release the amount to the PCGG despite a Supreme Court ruling that the amount was part of the late President Ferdinand Marcos' ill-gotten wealth.

The amount was supposed to be an installment of the $2-billion damage suit award the Marcos human rights abuse victims won against the former dictator's estate from a United States court in 1995.

The $25 million was part of a $356-million deposit taken from the Liechtenstein funds in Germany that Marcos owned.

Avila said the local court's ruling that there was a Golden Buddha would play a crucial role when the Roxas heirs submit a formal claim to get their share from the $25 million.

"What I know is that each victim would get around $3,000," he said.

Judge Fernando Vil Pamintuan of the regional trial court here ruled in August last year that the Buddha statuette in the court's custody is a fake or a replica of the original.

He said the original statuette "had a detachable head and which had been missing since 1971 or for a period of 35 years."

"The original statuette has been in unlawful possession of persons who do not have the title over it, or any right at all to possess it," Pamintuan said.

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Brrr months over, chilly morns remain

By DJ Yap

THE BRRR MONTHS MAY BE over but you can still expect more of that early morning chill in the next few weeks, as the tail end of a cold front hovers over Metro Manila and a large portion of Luzon, according to the weather bureau.

Farther down south, the Visayas and Mindanao will be experiencing cloudy skies due to an inter-tropical convergence zone, said an advisory from the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa).

Nathaniel Cruz, Pagasa weather branch chief, said eastern Luzon was catching the tail end of a cold front, with moderate to strong winds blowing in from the northeast.

Scattered rain showers and thunderstorms were expected to be more widespread in the eastern sections of the Visayas and Mindanao, "which may trigger flash floods and landslides," he warned.

"As for [typhoons], thank God, none are forthcoming," Cruz said in a phone interview yesterday.

Cruz said Metro Manila residents could expect cold mornings well up to February or at least until the last week of January.

"It will be more pronounced in Baguio, Tagaytay and other mountainous areas like the Cordilleras," as well as in areas that "divide" the cold and hot air, including northern Luzon, he said.

Cruz said the cold spell was abnormal, considering that "it's supposed to be the dry season already, but it's still cold."

"Most people think the cold season ends in January, but actually it begins only in December, so we should expect nice weather in the next few weeks," he said.

GMA IN JOLO PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo walks back to her Learjet at the Jolo airport Monday after attending a command conference at the 104th Brigade Headquarters in Jolo, Sulu. With her are, from left, Navy chief Vice Admiral Rogelio Calunsag, Sulu Gov. Benjamin Loong and AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon. *(See story on Page 1)*

LYN RILLON

Arroyo camp warns of Estrada comeback

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE ADMINISTRATION CAMP expressed fears yesterday an opposition victory in the May 14 midterm elections would usher in the return to power of ousted President Joseph Estrada.

Populating both houses of Congress with Estrada loyalists could also lead to his acquittal, or pardon, in case he were found guilty of the plunder and perjury charges leveled against him, the congressional leaders said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo's allies led by Lakas Representatives Exequiel Javier of Antique and Salacnib Baterina of Ilocos Sur then challenged the opposition to be honest and admit that the coming polls were a battle between the administration and the opposition.

Baterina, however, expressed confidence the support of the President's political leaders would carry the day for the administration's candidates in May.

"The people will not risk entrusting our country once more to Erap and his puppets who almost drove it to its knees before President Arroyo came into power," said Baterina, a vice chair of the House justice committee.

ESTRADA

Javier, chair of the committee on economic affairs, described as "distorted and flawed" the view that the May polls were a battle between the people and President Arroyo, and not between her and Estrada.

"Estrada's hunger for power still drives the opposition," the lawmaker said.

"Everyone knows who is the real puppet master behind the campaign against President Arroyo and it is Estrada," he added.

Estrada's involvement in the anti-Arroyo drive stretched back to the failed Edsa 3 uprising, the aborted Oakwood mutiny, the unsuccessful opposition poll campaigns of 2001 and 2004, and the destabilization and impeachment attempts "of which the ousted President had been the strategist and financier, calling all the shots in a desperate attempt to return to power," Javier said.

On Sunday, House Minority Leader Francis Escudero said the May senatorial elections would once and for all show the "people's judgment" of President Arroyo as the leader of the country.

Escudero said the voting public would seize this chance to vote "to let the administration know how they feel concerning social issues such as poverty, peace and order, and political matters such as the President's legitimacy and the recent constitutional assembly fiasco."

"This is the first time after the controversy-ridden 2004 presidential elections that the people (will be) given the chance to be heard and pass judgment. Their sentence will be definitely carried out and it will be a hard blow to the Arroyo administration," he said.

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SC rules families must leave Jusmag

By Armand N. Nocum

THE SUPREME COURT HAS ruled with finality on the takeover by the Bases Conversion Development Authority (BCDA) of nearly 40 hectares of land belonging to the Joint US Military Assistance Group (Jusmag) in Fort Bonifacio after it junked the motion for reconsideration filed by an organization made up of military generals and their wives.

In a two-page resolution, the high court threw out the appeal filed by the Southside Homeowners Association Inc. (SHAI) seeking to reverse the tribunal's Sept. 22, 2006, decision declaring the 39.9 hectares of land in Fort Bonifacio as belonging to the government.

"Acting on the pleadings filed in these cases, the Court resolves to deny with finality respondents' motion for reconsideration and supplemental motion for reconsideration... the basic issues raised therein having been duly considered and passed upon by the Court in the aforesaid decision and no substantial argument having been adduced to warrant the reconsideration sought," the Supreme Court said.

Last year, the court declared that the 39.9-ha belonged to the Fort Andres Bonifacio Military Reservation and could not be purchased by private corporations or individuals.

In a 24-page decision penned by Associate Justice Cancio Garcia, the high tribunal also ordered the military officers, their families and members of SHAI to vacate the property.

The high court also directed the Register of Deeds of Pasig or Taguig cities to cancel Transfer Certificate of Title (TCT) No. 1508 in the name of SHAI.

The law creating the BCDA was vested with authority to own, hold onto and administer portions of Metro Manila military camps that may be transferred to it by the President and to dispose, after the lapse of a number of months, of portions of Fort Bonifacio.

Military officers, both active and retired, and their families had been occupying housing units and facilities originally constructed by the AFP in the Jusmag area.

Ely Buendia stricken

SINGER-SONGWRITER ELY Buendia, 36-year-old front man for the rock band Pupil, was rushed to the hospital on Sunday after suffering a heart attack.

He was given an emergency angioplasty to treat two arterial blockages on Sunday night.

"He's now conscious. He's okay. His vital signs are stabilizing, but he is still under observation," Pupil manager Day Cabuhat told the INQUIRER.

Buendia is now in the intensive care unit of a leading hospital.

According to Cabuhat, the doctors speculated that Buendia suffered the heart attack while performing onstage with Pupil in a gig in Laguna.

Buendia used to be the leader of the seminal '90s band Eraserheads, which disbanded in 2002.

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Alternate routes to avoid Quiapo fest jam

By Margaux C. Ortiz

MOTORISTS BOUND FOR MANILA should use alternate routes to avoid getting caught in traffic jams expected to be created by the procession of the Black Nazarene from the Quirino Grandstand in Rizal Park to the Quiapo Church starting at noon.

The Manila District Traffic Enforcement Office has mapped out the route to be taken by the image which is celebrating its 400th anniversary today.

Senior Supt. Elmer Jamias, MDTEO chief, said that from the Quirino Grandstand, the procession will turn right on Katigbak Drive, straight to Padre Burgos Street and then on to MacArthur Bridge. From there, it will turn right on Carlos Palanca Street, left on P. Gomez Street, right on P. Paterno Street, right on Quezon Boulevard, left on Carlos Palanca, left on Quezon Boulevard and then right on Arlegui Street.

The procession will then turn right on Fraternal Street, right on Vergara, left on Duque de Alba, left on Castillejos, left on Farnecio, right on Arlegui, left on J. Nepomuceno, left on C. Aguila, then right on Carcer, right on R. Hidalgo, left on Bilibid Viejo and then left on Gil Puyat.

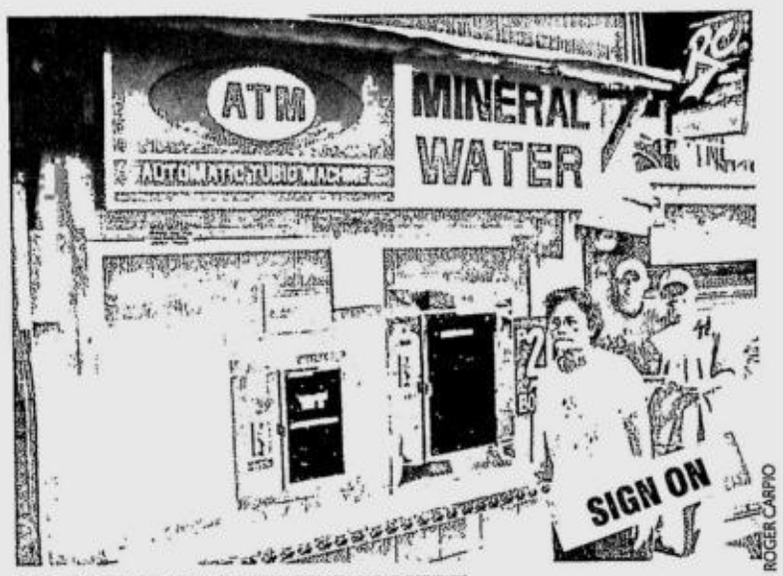
Upon reaching Gil Puyat, the procession will turn left on Z.P. De Guzman, right on R. Hidalgo, left on Barbosa, right on Globo de Oro, right on Carlos Palanca, right on Villabalos and then finally, straight to Plaza Miranda and Quiapo Church.

Certain roads near the path of the procession will be closed to traffic, the MDTEO added.

These include:

- the southbound lane of Quezon Boulevard near the Quiapo area which will be closed starting at 11 a.m. to all public transport. However, the lane will be closed to all vehicles at noon.
- the southbound stretch of Bonifacio Drive from Anda Circle to 25th Street
- the northbound stretch of Roxas Boulevard from T.M. Kalaw to P. Burgos Streets
- the eastbound lane of P. Burgos as well as the northbound lane going to MacArthur Bridge
- C. Palanca from Plaza Lacson to Quezon Boulevard (Quiapo *ilalim*)
- España/Lerma from P. Campa to Quezon Boulevard
- Andalucia/Fugoso, Palanca/Estero Cegado, Isetann Service Road/Recto/Quezon Boulevard southbound, Nepomuceno and Bilibid Viejo
- P. Casal/Palanca, the stretch

ALTERNATE/ A18



ROGER CARPIO

NO MONEY LAUNDERING HERE
This ATM (Automatic Tubig Machine) located at Krus na Ligas in Quezon City does not dispense cash but laundry services.

Model denies affair with Valera

'It's very Filipino for families to have politician-friends'

HERGIELYN Dimagiba with "family friend" Abra Gov. Vicente Valera. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

By Margaux C. Ortiz

IN AN ATTEMPT TO CLEAR HER name and that of her family, the 25-year-old model being linked to Abra Gov. Vicente Valera went to the National Bureau of Investigation yesterday to deny that she was the official's girlfriend.

Accompanied by her parents and a lawyer, Hergielyn Dimagiba answered questions from NBI National Capital Region (NCR) Office chief Ruel Lasala. She also brought documents proving her assertions.

"Governor Valera is a friend of our family, especially my father, who breeds fighting cocks," Dimagiba told the NBI official. Valera is being linked to the killing of Abra Rep. Luis Bersamin Jr. who was shot outside a Quezon City church on Dec. 16,

Dimagiba added that as a model, she helped Valera by providing entertainers for fiestas in Abra.

Taking out a controversial photo that showed her sitting beside Valera and two other women, she said the picture was taken during the Aliw Awards at the Manila Hotel last September.

"It is unfair to show this picture as proof of our alleged relationship," she said.

As a model, she had pictures taken with many "big-time" people, including Manny Pacquiao.

"Does this mean that I am Pacquiao's girlfriend too?" the model said.

Dimagiba added that the assets her family owned, including two cars, a *carinderia* (small canteen), and a computer shop, were not given by Valera.

"Our family worked hard to buy those properties," she emphasized, adding that she moved to Teresa Heights last Dec. 13 and has rented the place since her brother returned from Europe.

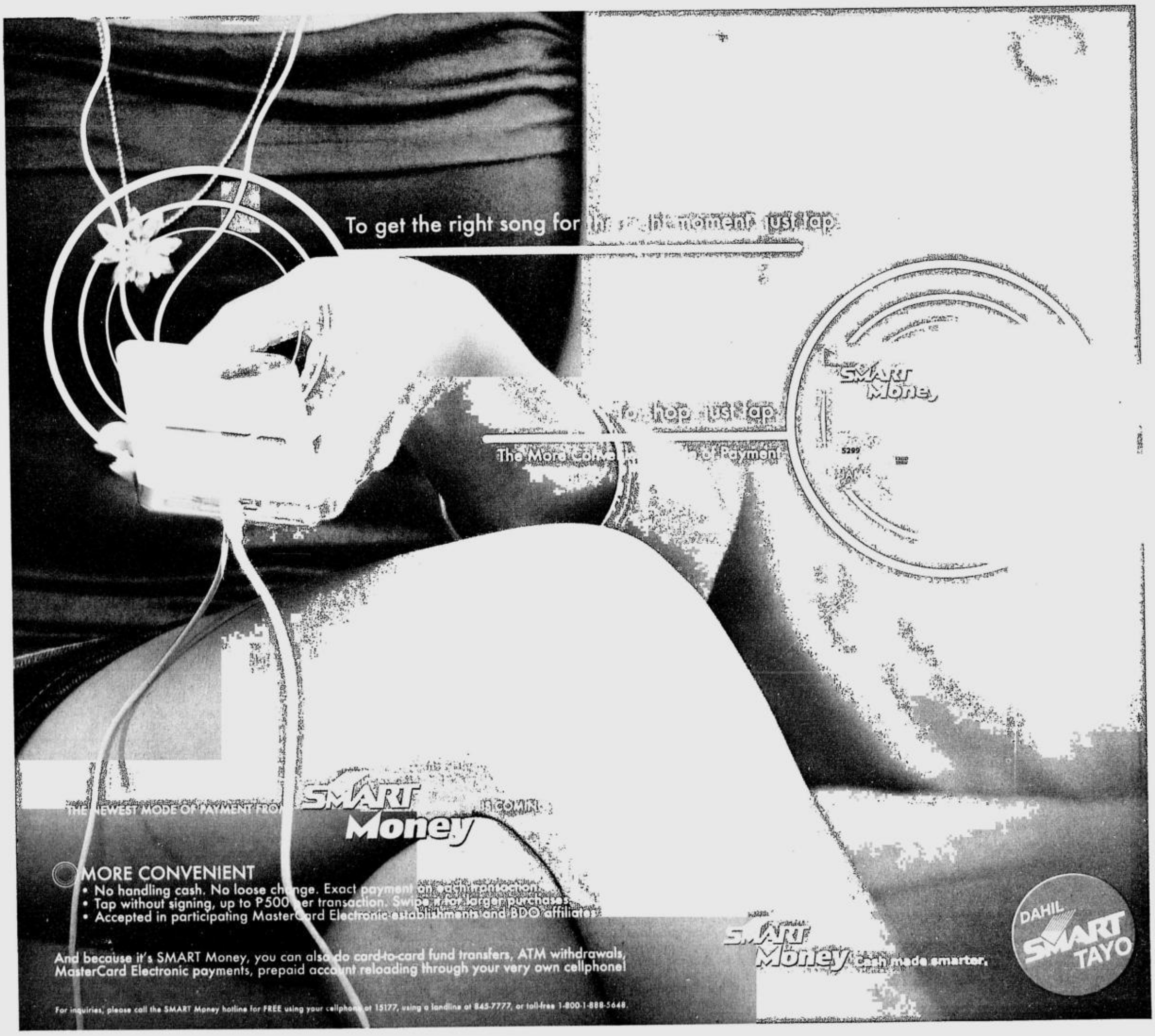
Dimagiba, who admitted joining the Bb. Pilipinas and Ms Quezon City beauty contests, said she first met their "family friend" during the Aliw Awards last year.

When asked if Valera regularly dropped by her house, Dimagiba said the Abra governor sometimes paid her father visits.

"It is very Filipino for families to have politician friends," the young woman explained the visits.

Dimagiba also admitted knowing Valera's three bodyguards by their nicknames: "Louie" and "Sarge" and "Bart." Louie and Bart were arrested

MODEL/ A18



Cainta dads want to take back casino permit

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE COUNCIL COMMITTEE which held a public hearing on the opening of an electronic gaming center believed to be a casino wants to revoke the permit issued to the project in Cainta, Rizal.

"We are recommending the revocation of the permits for the proposed casino. That is in our committee report," Councilor Amado Felix, who chairs the committee on games and amusement, told the INQUIRER.

He said at least 116 residents in Cainta attended the public hearing held last month.

"Most of the residents who joined the hearing were against the opening of the casino," Felix added.

The Diocese of Antipolo spearheaded a rally last November in which almost 2,000 students and parishioners showed their opposition to the operation of the casino.

The establishment, which is located next to the Sta. Lucia East Grand Mall and in front of a computer school, was reportedly scheduled to open that month.

Church officials expressed concern that the casino would lure students and resident into gambling.

But Mayor Mon Ilagan stood by his decision to allow the operation of what he described as an "electronic gaming center."

He added that he has only issued a building permit for the project.

"Those who attended the public hearing looked at the benefits and the disadvantages of the casino. But they said the casino would do more harm than good," Felix said.

According to church officials, the establishment was set to begin operating this month.

Felix said furnishing of the building was still ongoing but Ilagan told the INQUIRER that he had not monitored any movement in the proposed gaming center, which would be operated together with a hotel.

Felix, Vice Mayor Jules Narag and other members of the City Council had earlier issued a resolution, saying none of them were against the proposed "Casino Filipino VIP Club" which would be equipped with slot machines.

The resolution described the business as a "slot machine arcade center" to be developed by the Creative Pacific Corp. and to be operated by the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp.

But after the prayer rally last November, Felix, Narag and their fellow opposition members in the council changed their stand on the proposed casino.

Alternate routes . . . From page A17

of Arlegui from P. Casal (Legarda) to Barbosa and Hidalgo St./San Sebastian

The MDTEO advised motorists to take the following alternate routes:

- Vehicles going to Bonifacio Drive should take A. Soriano Street; instead of the northbound lane of Roxas Boulevard, motorists should use T.M. Kalaw Street while vehicles headed for P. Burgos Street should take 25th Street, turn left on Bonifacio Drive and then right on A. Soriano Street.
- Instead of España, vehicles should turn left on Nicanor Reyes Street (also known as Morayta) and then turn left on C. M. Recto Avenue, turn right on Legarda Street and then on to P. Casal Street.
- Those coming from Dimasalang/Blumentritt Street should go straight to C.M. Recto Avenue and then turn right on Oroqueta Street.
- All vehicles coming from the southern part of MacArthur Bridge should take the Jones flyover, turn right to the Philippine Post Corp. and then turn back to Plaza Lacson. They should then turn left on F. Torres Street and right on C. M. Recto Avenue.
- Since Nepomuceno and Bilibid Viejo will be closed to traffic, all public transport coming from Loyola and headed for Quiapo should turn left on C.M. Recto Avenue and then left on Legarda; all vehicles from Legarda intending to pass through P. Casal/Palanca Street should go straight to Taft Avenue, right on P. Burgos using Quezon Bridge, go straight to the Quezon Boulevard service road and turn right on C.M. Recto Avenue.
- Vehicles plying the San Juan-Quiapo route should use Legarda or P. Casal Street; and all vehicles coming from the southern part of Manila should take Estero Cegado/Ronquillo up to Evangelista, pass through Plaza Sta. Cruz and turn left on F. Torres Street to reach their destination.

DEVOTEES dance at the Plaza Miranda in Quiapo in preparation for the feast marking the 400th year of the Black Nazarene. ERIK ARAZAS

LRT ready for devotees of 'Señor Nazareno'

A QUIAPO Church official readies the Black Nazarene for its transfer to the Quirino Grandstand yesterday. ERIK ARAZAS

By Riza T. Olchondra

THE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT AUTHORITY which operates LRT Lines 1 and 2 has deployed additional trains to accommodate the huge number of devotees expected to join the Black Nazarene procession in Quiapo, Manila today.

About 800,000 devotees are expected to participate in the festivities marking the 400th anniversary in the country of the life-size image of Jesus Christ from Mexico.

For emergencies

The LRTA also ordered its personnel in the security, maintenance and engineering services to report as early as 5 a.m. to its United Nations, Central and Carriedo stations "to attend to any emergencies."

The three stations are near Quiapo Church, home of the Black Nazarene and the center of today's celebration.

The LRTA said it will deploy two more trains for LRT Line 1 which runs from Baclaran to Monumento, putting the number of trains operating today at 20.

More trains

Two additional trains will similarly be put on standby for LRT Line 2 which runs from Recto to Santolan.

The increased number of trains is expected to shorten waiting time at stations to just five minutes.

Motorists have already been advised by the Manila police to avoid Taft Avenue and P. Burgos beginning at 4 p.m. yesterday, as the Black Nazarene was to be transferred from Quiapo Church to Rizal Park starting at 6 p.m.

Fireworks

A fireworks display was set to welcome the image, followed by a candlelight ceremony to be led by Jaro Archbishop Angel N. Lagdameo, president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), and a vigil.

High Mass

At 6 a.m. today, a High Mass will be celebrated by Cardinal Rosales, followed by an "Agape" or sharing of food by the devotees at 8 a.m. to 9 a.m.

At noon, the Black Nazarene image will be returned to Quiapo Church in the traditional procession snaking through Quiapo's streets from the Luneta Grandstand.

The two-day celebration reenacts the "traslacion," said a statement from Msgr. Josefino S. Ramirez, parish priest of Quiapo and head of the organizing committee that led preparations for the event.

Transfer

It recalls the transfer of the image—from a church ran by Recollect friars in Intramuros to its present home in Quiapo—in the 18th century.

DID YOU KNOW

THERE are two images of the Nuestro Padre Señor Jesus de Nazareno at the Quiapo Church. Both are hybrids of the original Black Nazarene statue from Mexico and the replica created by Filipino sculptor Gener Manlaqui. The one which is paraded around the Quiapo district every Jan. 9 has the head of Manlaqui's replica and the body of the original image—encased in stainless steel to protect it from further damage. The second image has the head of the old statue and the body of the replica. The original Black Nazarene, the mulatto Christ carrying a heavy cross, was made by an unknown Mexican sculptor in the early 17th century and was brought to Manila on board a galleon by a Recollect priest.

Cyril L. Bonabente, Inquirer Research

METROBRIEFS

Tantoco scion dead

THE FAMILY that built the Rustan's chain of department stores lost a scion yesterday when 38-year-old Joel Tantoco was found dead in his condominium in Makati City. Police were immediately called in to investigate Tantoco's death but Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, a family friend, said the grandson of patriarch Bienvenido Tantoco died of natural causes. "There was no foul play," Binay said when the Inquirer caught up with him as he walked out of the condominium. Even the mayor's guards were barred from entering Regina Building on Aguirre Street in Legaspi Village, where Tantoco was found dead at around 7 a.m. inside his unit. Investigators refused to give any information about his death, except to say that his body was found on a sofa by a security guard. Tantoco had no external injuries, they added.

Tarra V. Quismundo

Drug suspect falls

THE SOUTHERN Police District arrested a suspected drug peddler and seized three kilos of dried marijuana leaves during a buy-bust operation before dawn yesterday in Muntinlupa City. Ronald Anthony Matias, 23, reportedly a big-time drug pusher operating in the cities of Parañaque and Muntinlupa, was collared by agents of the SPD Special Anti-Crime Unit headed by Supt. Ronald Ylagan at a gasoline station on Alabang-Zapote Road. Senior Insp. Arvin Fabro of the SPD police community relations division said Matias was placed under surveillance for a week before his arrest. Seized from him was a blue traveling bag containing marijuana leaves.

Jocelyn R. Uy

Alphan induction

CHIEF Justice Reynato S. Puno will induct the incoming officers of the UP Alpha Phi Beta Fraternity Chancery, led by Lord Chancellor Pastor "Mar" Reyes Jr., on Jan. 15, 7 p.m. at the Wack Wack Golf Club in Mandaluyong City. Associate Justice Edgardo Cruz of the Court of Appeals will induct the incoming Alphan Executive Board and Committee chairmen. All Alphans are invited to the affair. For details, call Pastor Reyes Jr. at 8924435 or 8131553.

5 in Quezon City mall heist face robbery raps

By DJ Yap

THE POLICE HAVE FILED charges against five of the nine armed robbers who made off with up to P55 million on Christmas Day when they robbed the Ever Gotesco mall in Quezon City.

Charged with robbery were Danilo Abanag, 34; Jerry Lumasog, 26; Alvin Flores, 34; Armando Dente, 40; Rey Noquiao and several John Does.

The complaint was filed on Friday by the criminal investigation unit of the Quezon City Police District led by Supt. Franklin Mabanag at the Quezon City prosecutor's office.

On Dec. 25 at 1 a.m., nine armed men dressed in Special Weapons And Tactics uniforms barged into the mall on Commonwealth Avenue, disarmed the guards and tied them up.

They then proceeded to the treasury room on the second floor and emptied the vault containing the mall's weekend sales and the employees' payroll. Mall treasurer Julita Rivera told police the robbers took away P55 million.

Witnesses were able to identify the suspects from photos in the police's "rogue gallery."

In a follow-up operation on Dec. 27, members of the District Intelligence and Operation Unit arrested Abanag at a fastfood chain on Edsa corner Roosevelt Avenue, Muñoz, on charges of possessing a weapon. His wife, however, claimed that Abanag was picked up by armed men from their house in Navotas on the same day.

The suspect was later identified by a mall guard, Rene Alinsonorin, as one of the nine armed men who staged the heist.

Model denies affair . . . From page A17

with Valera last Dec. 29.

When Lasala showed her photos of the other suspects in the killing Bersamin, including Freddie Dupo, Sonny Taculao and Dominador Barbosa, Dimagiba shook her head. "I do not know any of those people," she stressed.

While the model admitted that she accompanied Valera to get his new Chevrolet van at Juno Cars Inc. on Shaw Boulevard last November, Dimagiba said she did not see any of the other suspects there as a police investigation earlier showed.

"We just had a meeting at the Edsa Shangri-la Mall regarding an upcoming Abra town fiesta then. I decided to accompany the governor to get his car later," she said.

Employees of the car dealer shop had positively identified Dupo as one of the persons who accompanied Valera when he paid for the vehicle, police earlier said.

"The only people who were with us were his bodyguards Louie and Bart," Dimagiba said.

Lasala, a member of Task Force Bersamin, said they would validate Dimagiba's claims.

"We are thankful that she decided to cooperate and accept our invitation to shed light on the case," the NBI official said.

The governor and his bodyguards were arrested on board the Chevrolet van over a traffic violation last Dec. 29.

Police later recovered a stash of firearms and a grenade in the vehicle, prompting them to file weapons possession charges against them.

Valera, 61, was detained for a few days and was released after posting bail in a Quezon City court.

Dupo was one of five people who allegedly carried out the Dec. 16 killings of the 62-year-old Bersamin and his police security aide just after the Abra congressman had attended the wedding of his niece at Mt. Carmel Church, according to former Army Sgt. Rufino Panday.

Panday, 63, who was arrested three days after the killings, had confessed he had acted as a "lookout" for the group tasked to carry out the P5-million contract on Bersamin.

He said Dupo had told him that Valera was the brains behind the assassination.

Valera has denied the charge. Except for Panday, the rest of the suspects are at large.

Protocol more important than 231 lives

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

WHICH IS MORE IMPORTANT, observing presidential protocol or saving 231 lives?

The answer is obvious. But it's not so obvious to government people who didn't allow a Gulf Air jetliner running low on fuel to land at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) because the presidential jet was about to take off.

The plane had come from Bahrain and radioed the control tower that it should be given priority to land because of an emergency.

But the people at the Air Transportation Office (ATO) did not allow the aircraft to land. To them, it was more important for the Lear jet carrying President Macapagal-Arroyo and her husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo, to take off first than for the distressed aircraft to land.

And where was the presidential aircraft bound for? Davao City where the President was to be a wedding sponsor.

The Gulf Air pilot had to land at the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport at Clark Field in Pampanga. As a result, the plane was declared "missing" for 15 minutes.

The ATO would sacrifice the lives of 231 passengers—excluding those of the pilots and crew—just so the President would not be late for the wedding! That's how screwed up our government priorities are!

***

A pilot-friend, talking about the incident at the Naia, said it was ironic that 231 or so lives would have been sacrificed for a president whose legitimacy in office is being questioned.

In Japan, people would die or even commit *hara kiri* for the Emperor. That's understandable because the Japanese love their Emperor.

But why should Filipinos sacrifice the lives of more than 231 people in favor of a president and her husband who are very unpopular, the pilot asked.

Which reminds me of a joke about a royal family in a faraway monarchy that was not loved by its subjects. One day, a big storm hit the kingdom and flooded many towns. The survivors were very hungry but food could not reach them by land.

So the royal family rode on a helicopter and from there threw food to the survivors below. The king, queen, prince and the little princess took turns throwing food in plastic bags to the hungry people whose hands were up in the air.

But the little princess noticed that even after receiving the relief goods, the people below didn't look happy.

"What would make those poor people happy?" the little princess asked the helicopter pilot. "Throw your parents overboard," the pilot said.

***

No matter how much money is poured to buy arms and equipment, our military will never win against communist insurgents and Moro bandits for as long as corruption is not eliminated in the Armed Forces.

The reaction of the AFP high command to accusations of corruption in the ranks is to ignore them. That's why the military is not going anywhere in its fight against the New People's Army, the Abu Sayyaf and the Moro secessionists.

One example is the item that appeared in this space on Dec. 2, 2006. The column reported that some military officers seemed to be in cahoots with Abu Sayyaf bandits.

I got the information from a US serviceman assigned as adviser to Filipino troops going after the Moro terrorist group. The US serviceman said the guns and ammunition donated to the Filipino troops by the US military went missing.

The guns and ammo, according to my informant, were stolen by Filipino soldiers and sold to the Abu Sayyaf.

It has been more than a month since that column item appeared, but it seems there has been no investigation of my allegations.

Is the AFP afraid that by investigating the report it will uncover a Pandora's box?

Democrats may deny funding if Bush seeks Iraq troop surge

WASHINGTON— DEMOCRATS now running Congress will not give President George W. Bush a blank check to wage war in Iraq, House of Representatives leader Nancy Pelosi said, suggesting they could deny him the money should he call for additional troops.

Yet Pelosi's second-in-command and a Senate leader on foreign affairs questioned the wisdom and legality of using the power of the purse to thwart the White House as Bush prepared to announce his revised war strategy this week—perhaps on Wednesday.

Republicans, now in the minority, said more troops were needed to get a handle on the spiraling violence in Iraq. They also cast doubt whether Democrats would—or could—block the president's plans. "Congress is incapable of micromanaging the tactics in the war," said Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky.

Pelosi, the House speaker, made clear that her party supported boosting the overall size of the military "to protect the American people against any threats to our interests, wherever they may occur. That's different, though, from adding troops to Iraq." She also said Democrats would not cut off money for those troops already in Iraq.

But dollars for a further buildup in Iraq—Bush's expected plan could send as many as 20,000 additional US troops—will get the strictest of scrutiny, she said.

"The burden is on the president to justify any additional resources for a mission," said Pelosi. "Congress is ready to use its constitutional authority of oversight to question what is the justification for this spending, what are the results we are receiving."

White House spokesperson Alex Conant said Bush welcomed any ideas on Iraq that "lead to success."

Bush was putting the finishing touches on his new policy over the weekend. In addition to the troop increase, it could provide more money for jobs and reconstruction programs in Iraq.

Since the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, Congress has approved about $500 billion for Iraq, Afghanistan and other terrorism-fighting efforts.

The White House is working on its largest-ever appeal for more war funds—a record $100 billion, at least. It will be submitted along with Bush's Feb. 5 budget. *AP*

2006 word of the year

ANAHEIM—PLUTO IS FINALLY getting some respect—from wordsmiths.

"Plutoed" was chosen 2006 Word of the Year by the American Dialect Society at its annual meeting on Friday.

To "pluto" is "to demote or devalue someone or something" much like what happened to the former planet last year when the General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union decided Pluto did not meet its definition of a planet.

"Our members believe the great emotional reaction of the public to the demotion of Pluto shows the importance of Pluto as a name," said society President Cleveland Evans. "We may no longer believe in the Roman god Pluto, but we still have a sense of personal connection with the former planet."

"Plutoed" won in a runoff against "climate canary," defined as "an organism or species whose poor health or declining numbers hint at a larger environmental catastrophe on the horizon."

Other words in the running: murse (man's purse), flog (a fake blog that promotes products) and macaca (an American citizen treated as an alien).

Former Sen. George Allen, a Republican who sought reelection last year, was comfortably ahead in polls until August, when he referred to the son of Indian immigrants as macaca, regarded by some as a racial slur. Allen lost to Democrat Jim Webb.

The 117-year-old organization includes linguists, grammarians, historians and independent scholars. In conducting the vote, members do so for fun and not in any official capacity of inducting words into the English language.

Last month, an online survey by dictionary publisher Merriam-Webster declared "truthiness" the word of the year for 2006. "Truthiness" was credited to television satirist Stephen Colbert, who defined it as "truth that comes from the gut, not books." *AP*

ARGENTINA CARNIVAL
A Mari-Mari dancer takes part in the El Carnaval del Pais in Gualeguaychu, Argentina, Jan. 6. The event is considered to be one of the most important carnivals in the country. REUTERS

WORLDBRIEFS

Satellite imagery for missing plane

MAKASSAR, Indonesia—US experts were studying satellite images of Sulawesi island Monday for signs of a jetliner that disappeared a week ago with 102 people on board, an embassy official said. A sonar-equipped US Navy ship headed to the area to take part in the search, while Indonesian officials simulated possible crash scenarios over the western coastal town of Majene, where the Boeing 737 last made contact before falling off the radar. "Today we will try to determine how far the plane could have glided if it had experienced engine failure," said Eddy Suyanto, who is heading the search effort. The Adam Air plane left Java island for the North Sulawesi provincial capital of Manado on New Year's Day, but experienced 130 kph winds and storms halfway through the two-hour flight, forcing it to change course at least twice, officials said. But the pilot did not issue a mayday or report technical problems. With no emergency location signal to guide more than 3,600 soldiers, police and volunteers searching in the island's dense jungles and surrounding seas, teams have fanned out over a nearly 80,000-sq km area. *AP*

Japan scientists link strokes to gene variant

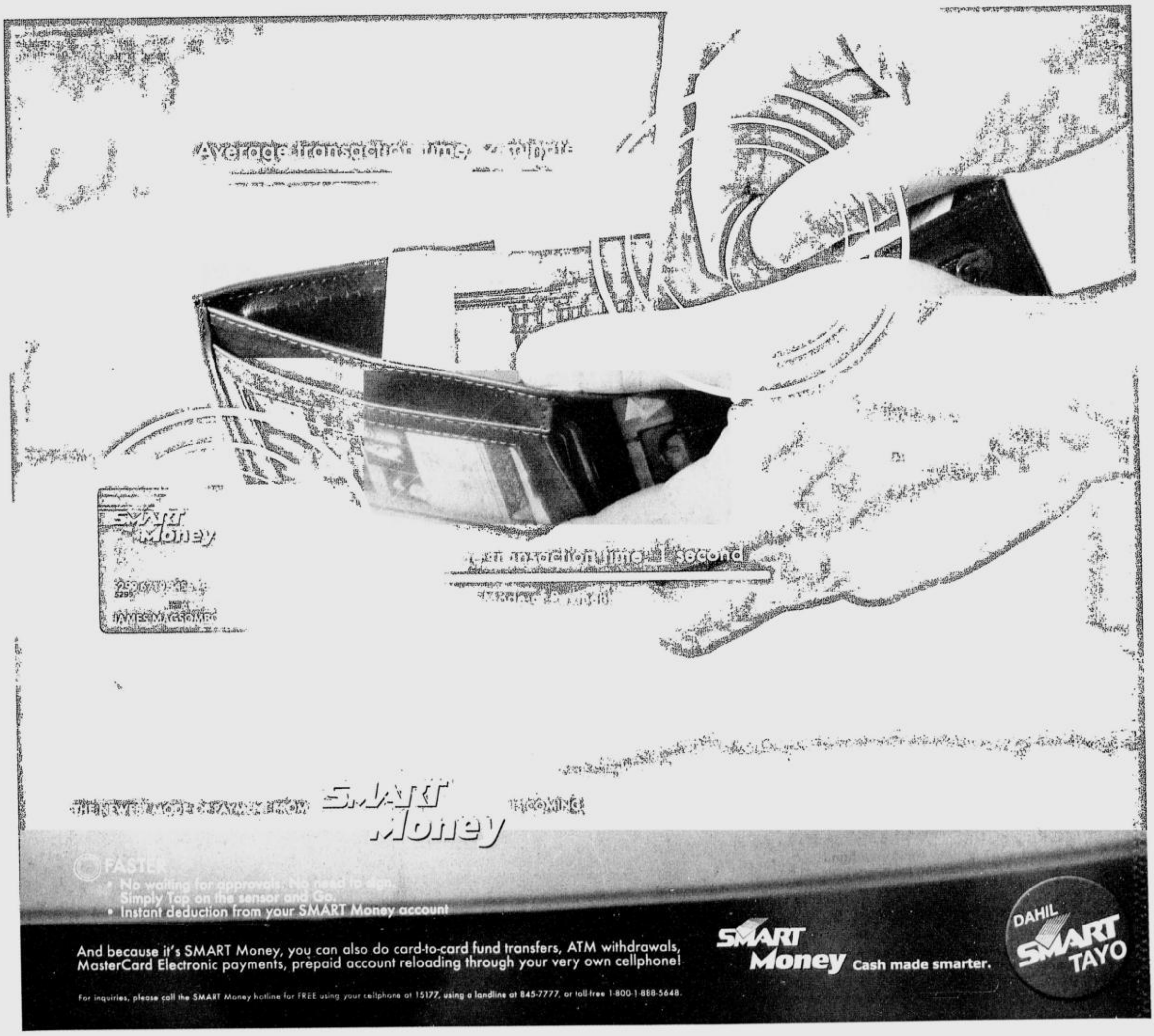
HONG KONG—Japanese researchers have identified a gene variant which appears to predispose a person to strokes, but it seems more prevalent in Asians than in those of European or African descent. In a paper to be published in February in Nature Genetics, researchers said the presence of the variant raised the risk of cerebral infraction, the most common type of stroke, by 40 percent. Cerebral infraction happens when blood supply to a part of the brain is obstructed, resulting in death or serious damage to brain cells. The obstruction can be caused by a blood clot, a build-up of fatty deposits in blood vessels or cancerous cells. The researchers studied 1,112 Japanese individuals and found that the variant of the gene PRKCH turned up more frequently in those who had had a stroke. Worldwide, 3 million women and 2.5 million men die from strokes each year. In the United States, someone dies of stroke every three minutes. *Reuters*

Israel developing world's largest drone

JERUSALEM—Israel is developing the world's largest unmanned aircraft which will be used for long-range operations and destroying ballistic missiles as they are being launched, a security official said Monday. The Eltan has been developed by the Israel Aircraft Industries and has a wing span of 35 meters—similar to that of a Boeing 737 passenger plane—the official told AFP. According to the Yediot Aharonot daily, the drone was designed for long endurance and high-altitude flights and is equipped with an array of advanced cameras and missiles which allow it to identify and intercept long-range missiles as they are being fired on the ground. It will make its maiden flight in the coming days, the paper said. *AFP*

Life for Chinese who conned convict's wife

BEIJING—A Chinese court has jailed a fraudster for life after he took more than $1 million from the wife of a millionaire but failed to save the tycoon from execution as promised, a newspaper said on Monday. In a widely publicised case, Yuan Baojing, once worth 3 billion yuan ($384 million), was sentenced to death in 2005 for killing a blackmailer who extorted money from him by threatening to expose his bungled attempt to eliminate a former partner. His wife, Zhuoma, met Wang Fuqiao at a friend's birthday party in February 2004, when Yuan was already under arrest, the Beijing News said. The 57-year-old jobless man passed himself off as a senior official at the State Council, or cabinet, and convinced Zhuoma that he was close to top Chinese leaders and could orchestrate Yuan's release as long as there was money, the newspaper said. Zhuoma gave him a total of 8 million yuan over more than a year, but her husband was eventually executed by lethal injection, along with his brother and cousin, in the northeastern province of Liaoning last year, the Beijing News said. *Reuters*



PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

TUESDAY, JANUARY 9, 2007

The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Report: Israel plans nuke strike on Iran

LONDON—ISRAEL HAS DRAWN UP plans to destroy Iranian uranium-enrichment facilities with a tactical nuclear strike, a British newspaper said Sunday in a report rejected by the Jewish state.

The Sunday Times quoted several Israeli military sources as saying that two of the country's air force squadrons are training to use "bunker-busting" bombs for a single strike.

The story is "incorrect," Israeli foreign ministry spokesperson Mark Regev said.

"Israel is 100 percent behind the international community's efforts to bring about an end to Iran's nuclear program. Israel totally supports Resolution 1737 and the international community must be ready to take even tougher measures against Iran," he said.

The Sunday Times, which in 1986 first revealed Israel's undeclared nuclear arsenal, said the plans involved sending conventional, laser-guided missiles to open up "tunnels" in the targets before "mini-nukes" with a force the equivalent of one-fifteenth of the Hiroshima bomb are fired in.

"As soon as the green light is given, it will be one mission, one strike and the Iranian nuclear project will be demolished," one of the unnamed sources was quoted as saying.

A senior Israeli official dismissed the report out of hand.

"This is absurd information coming from a newspaper that has already in the past distinguished itself with sensationalist headlines that in the end amounted to nothing," the official, who asked not to be named, said.

"To think that we will launch an atomic attack against Iran, and on top of that we would reveal it in advance to a foreign newspaper is doubly ridiculous," the official added.

Iran warned of dire consequences in the event of any such Israeli attack.

"Any action against the Islamic republic will not go without a response and the aggressor would regret the action very quickly," foreign ministry spokesperson Mohammad Ali Hosseini told reporters.

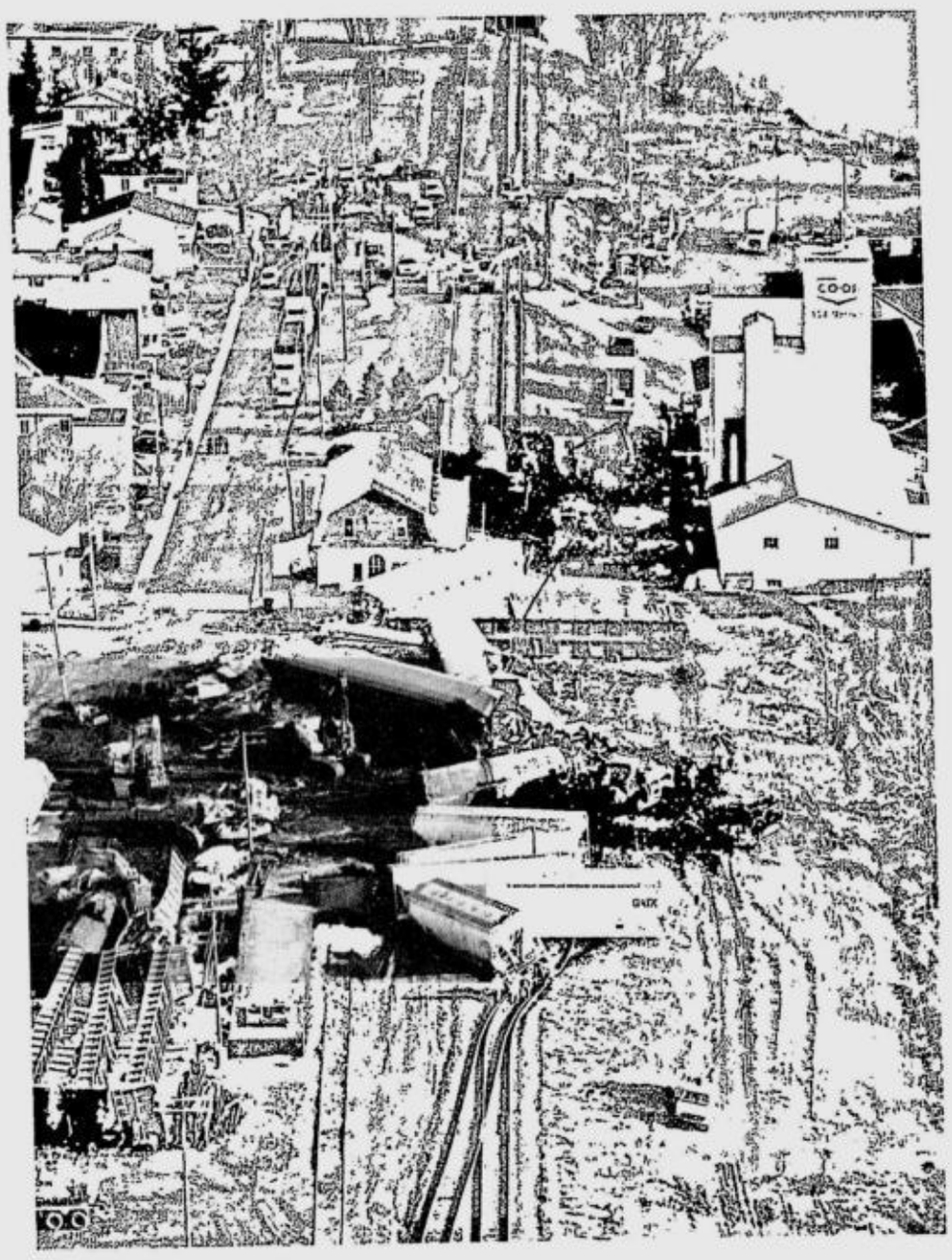
He described the Sunday Times report as "proof of the weakness of the enemy and will have no effect on the determination of the Islamic republic to continue its (nuclear) activities."

Israel and the United States, the Islamic republic's two arch-enemies, accuse Iran of seeking a nuclear weapon—a charge vehemently denied by Tehran, which refuses to bow to United Nations demands to halt uranium-enrichment work.

Even after the UN Security Council agreed to impose its first-ever sanctions on Iran in December, Israel has pushed for tougher international action against the Islamic republic.

Iran's hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has in the past called for Israel to be wiped off the map and also casting doubt on the scale of the Holocaust.

Israel has refused to rule out preemptive military action against Iran. In 1981, it took action against Iraq's nuclear reactor in Osirak. *AFP*



PILE UP IN CANADA

Railcars are piled up off the tracks on Jan. 7, in Montmagny, Quebec. As many as 24 cars of an 80-car CN freight train derailed about 1 a.m. in Montmagny. AP

Japan to create defense ministry

TOKYO—JAPAN IS TO CREATE A FULL-fledged defense ministry on Tuesday for the first time since its World War II defeat, when the United States stripped the country of its right to a military.

The government is to upgrade the existing Defense Agency into the Defense Ministry. The agency had a lower standing than full-fledged ministries as Japan's 1947 constitution declared the country to be pacifist.

The creation of the ministry was a top priority for Prime Minster Shinzo Abe. The Diet, or parliament, passed the required legislation, with support from both the ruling coalition and main opposition, late December.

The move is based on "a change in the security environment surrounding our country," Defense Agency Chief Fumio Kyuma said during a military exercise in Chiba, southeast of Tokyo, at the weekend.

"It is important to make our Self-Defense Force more powerful," said Kyuma, who is to become the nation's first defense minister since the end of the war.

Japanese troops will still be called the "Self-Defense Force" despite the creation of the ministry. The country has one of the world's biggest military budgets at 4.81 trillion yen ($41.6 billion) a year.

Previous attempts to create a defense ministry stalled over political sensitivities in light of Japan's past aggression and fears of upsetting neighboring countries.

In a groundbreaking move, Japan sent troops on a reconstruction mission to Iraq, the first time since 1945 that it had deployed to a country where fighting was underway.

Japan also sent close to 1,000 troops to Indonesia to assist with relief after the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.

Besides symbolism, the law will also give the defense ministry more power in internal wrangling by letting it submit its own budget requests.

The law changes the status of troops, listing overseas activities as one of their missions. Until now, deployments abroad were considered "extraordinary," leading the government to seek parliamentary approval. *AFP*

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WHAT'S INSIDE

Reyes unscathed at 7-0; Luat, Sambajon second/A23

SPORTS

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Lakers halt Mavs' victory run at 13/A24

SBP moves on even without BAP

By June Navarro

DIFFICULT TIMES CONTINUE TO LAY AHEAD for Philippine basketball.

But the Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas is determined to single-handedly put the country back on the international basketball map after the Basketball Association of the Philippines threw a monkey wrench anew on the unification talks.

In a press conference attended by majority of the country's top basketball leaders, PLDT chair Manny V. Pangilinan announced that the SBP would continue the process of forming a new unified body which the Fiba (International Basketball Federation) had required for the lifting of its suspension on the Philippines.

The SBP looked set to emerge as the new national cage association until the BAP fired Sen. Jinggoy Estrada as its president last Saturday and scuttled the pact of unity Estrada had forged with Pangilinan in Hong Kong recently.

The BAP executive board charged that Estrada struck a deal with Pangilinan without consulting the organization.

Ousted by the Philippine Olympic Committee in 2005, the discredited cage body also wants SBP to be known as BAP.

By dismissing Estrada, BAP officials said they lost representation in the three-man panel which created the SBP on the strength of a Fiba communiqué signed by the BAP and Pilipinas Basketball representatives in Tokyo in September.

"We can move with some difficulty without the BAP playing its part in the communiqué," said Pangilinan. "But we have to start somewhere. The door, however, is still open for any form of cooperation with the BAP."

Estrada, who showed up at the press conference at the Shangri-La hotel in Makati City, admitted that he failed to thoroughly consult the BAP when he reached an agreement with Pangilinan.

Under the agreement, Estrada would sit as chair of the SBP with Pangilinan as president.

"I admit that I decided on my own but I believe basketball will never go wrong when I decided to merge the BAP with SBP," said Estrada.

"I came here not as the president of the BAP but as a senator who will help basketball in this country get back to its feet," he added.

UNITED WE STAND: Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, SBP president Manny Pangilinan, UAAP's Jun-Jun Capistrano and lawyer Marivic Añonuevo (from left) join hands at yesterday's press conference. EDWIN BACASMAS

In a solid show of force, all the major stakeholders of Pilipinas Basketball attended the conference.

Among the key personalities were officials of the Philippine Basketball Association led by commissioner Noli Eala, Philippine Basketball League commissioner Chino Trinidad, the UAAP board of directors and members of the NCAA management committee.

Also attending the conference were the PBA players who represented the national team led by Asi Taulava, Willie Miller, Kerby Raymundo, Jayjay Helterbrand, Renren Ritualo, Dondon Hontiveros, Danny Seigle and coach Chot Reyes.

Pangilinan said the SBP hopes to get the recognition of the Philippine Olympic Committee soon and facilitate its reinstatement by the Fiba.

He said he had received positive response after discussing SBP's accreditation with POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco recently.

"There are more pressing matters to attend to within the formation of the SBP," said Pangilinan, referring to the internal house-keeping that should be done and the preparation of the national team to overseas event on the way to the 2008 Olympics."

Naascu defects to PB

NOW THEY ARE DOWN TO 65.

Officials of the National Athletic Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (Naascu) yesterday defected to Pilipinas Basketball in the wake of the Basketball Association of the Philippines' breakaway from efforts to unify the sport.

Naascu president Dr. Jay Adalem announced the group's shift of allegiance to the PB during a press conference of the Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas yesterday at the Shangri-La hotel in Makati City.

"It's a matter of principle," said Adalem, whose 10-school league was part of the 66 member organizations which the BAP claims is under its fold. "The things that are happening within the BAP don't adhere to our principles anymore."

Adalem, who represents St. Claire in the Naascu board, explained that they decided to change their loyalty after the BAP dumped Sen. Jinggoy Estrada as president.

"I have yet to notify the BAP about our decision," Adalem told the INQUIRER. "But we have already made up our minds."

The addition of Naascu will bring the PB membership to 22. It has the PBA, PBL, UAAP and NCAA as major members. *June Navarro*

Comets, Sealers eye key victories

GAMES TODAY
(*Emilio Aguinaldo Gym*)
2 p.m.—TeleTech vs Mail and More
4 p.m.—Sista vs Toyota Otis

MAIL AND MORE gets a chance to avenge one of its two losses when the Comets tangle with the TeleTech Titans today in the PBL Silver Cup at the Emilio Aguinaldo gym.

The Comets, who share the lead with Henkel Sista at 6-2, will be vying for their sixth straight win in their rematch with the Titans at 2 p.m.

"We have to come out more aggressive," said Mail and More coach Lawrence Chongson. "We have to learn what's wrong the last time."

The young crew absorbed its last defeat against TeleTech, 79-70, on Nov. 23.

Henkel Sista will also try to sustain its win roll versus the Toyota Otis Sparks in the second game at 4 p.m.

Expected to lead Sista is Marcy Arellano, who averaged 15.7 points in the last three games.

If Henkel Sista and Mail and More win, they will secure at least a playoff for the two outright semifinal berths. *Jasmine Payo*

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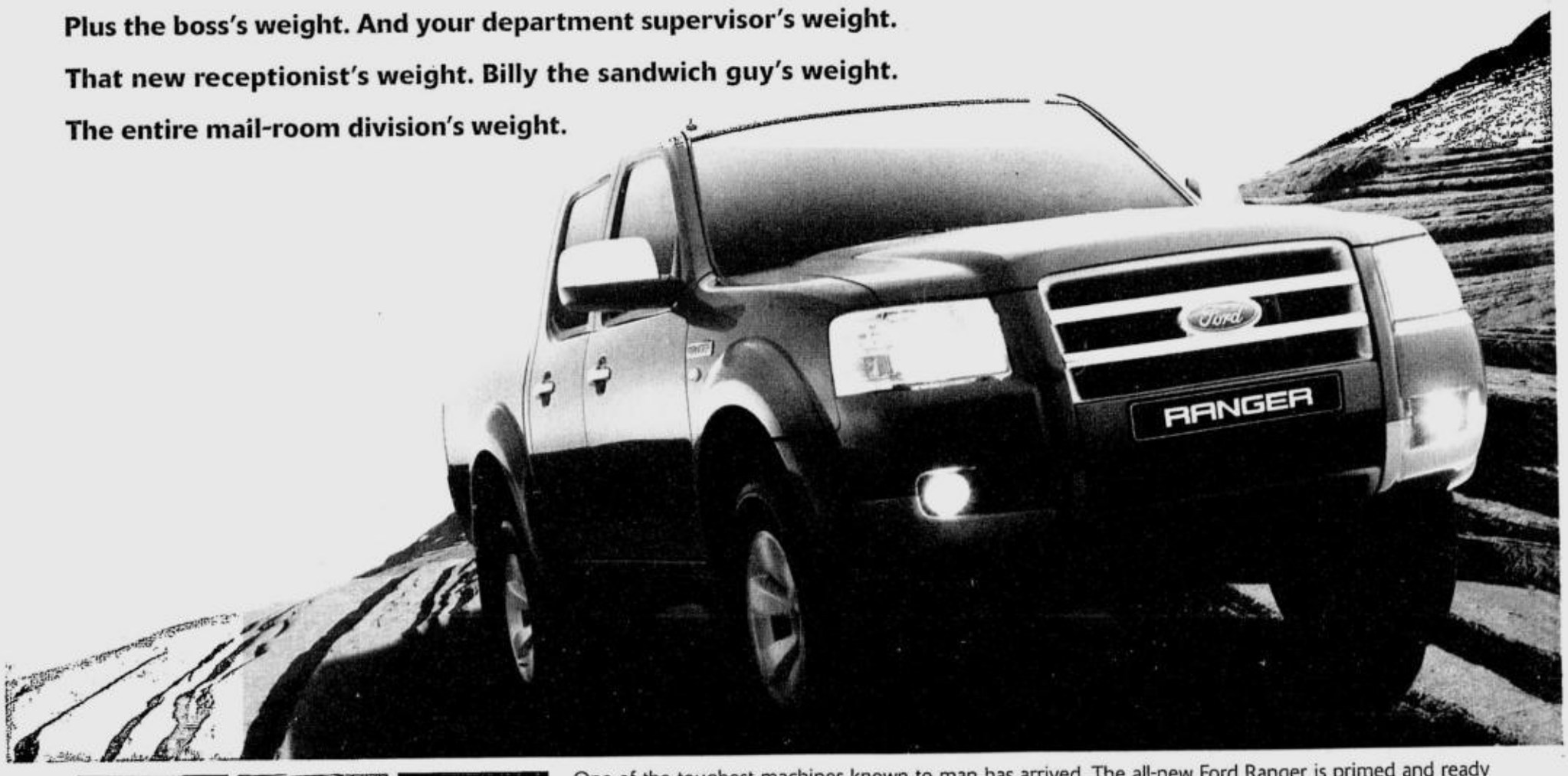

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Manny rushed to hospital with suspected ulcer

PACQUIAO with Esguerra (back)

By Salven L. Lagumbay, *Contributor*

BOXING SUPERSTAR MANNY PACQUIAO yesterday checked into the Cardinal Santos Memorial Hospital in San Juan with suspected ulcer and failed to attend a business dinner-meeting with erstwhile arch rival Erik Morales.

Pacquiao's ailment is described by attending physicians as "acid reflux," a condition in which the liquid content of the stomach regurgitates and inflames the lining of the esophagus.

It is the second time the famous fighter has been hospitalized in the last 12 months because of the same ailment.

Pacquiao had actually met with Morales Saturday night at Diamond Hotel along Roxas Boulevard where they talked over bottles of light beer, just a few minutes after the Mexican arrived with his wife Andrea from Mexico.

Morales and Andrea, a 23-year-old teacher, are reportedly in the country on the invitation of a Filipino friend who happens to be the couple's neighbor in California.

The couple is also planning to spend some time at the super exclusive resort of Amanpulo off Palawan.

Guests arrive there by chartered plane, which lands directly on Pamalican, according to a website.

Last Sunday, Pacquiao flew back to Davao City for undisclosed reasons before planing back to Manila yesterday, where he complained of stomach problems. He then decided to proceed to the hospital.

Pacquiao, who stopped Morales in the third round in the last installment of their lucrative trilogy in November, was supposed to meet Morales at the residence of a close friend of the Filipino pug last night to discuss a possible team up for a television commercial.

There, negotiations for the commercial, to be done with trainer Freddie Roach, for San Miguel Beer, would have started.

A source said that, although Morales came to the country not for the San Miguel Beer commercial, chances are they just might as well shoot the advertisement if Morales finds the time.

"Everything is really being kept under wraps," said the source. "They don't want to pre-empt anything."

Pacquiao, who has become one of the most sought-after product endorsers around, has had a busy schedule after destroying Morales. And his new television ad with San Miguel could just be one of the many lined up for the year.

GMs Antonio, Torre deny game-fixing involvement

TORRE: Abhors game-fixing

ANTONIO: Wary of player conpiracies

By Marlon Bernardino, *Contributor*

AT LEAST A SIX-MONTH SUSPENSION AND THEN A LIFETIME BAN FOR A SECOND offense in the future will be imposed on chess players found guilty of game-fixing, the country's top chess official announced yesterday.

National Chess Federation of the Philippines (NCFP) president and Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay also said they are digging deeper into the scandal and expect to punish the erring players soon.

Pichay's announcement came as Grandmasters Eugene Torre and Joey Antonio Jr. denied they were the GM alluded to by an NCFP source as among the seven players suspected of involvement in game-fixing.

The 55-year-old Torre, Asia's first GM, said he abhors game-fixing and has openly expressed his support for Pichay's move to clean the sport.

"*Sa buong buhay ko kahit isang beses ay hindi ako naghulog ng laro* (I have never thrown a game in my whole life)" said Torre, founding president of the NCFP and currently player's council head.

Torre is the third ranking Filipino—behind fellow GM Mark Paragua and Antonio—in the January Fide list with an Elo rating of 2547.

Antonio, the 12-time National Open champion, also denied involvement in the scandal, saying he and Torre even skipped some local events last year due to "incidents where some players deliberately lost games" to favor the winning chances of others.

"*Hindi namin gusto ang nagaganap na kampihan sa* (We didn't like the conspiracy and unholy alliances in) Philippine chess," said Antonio, who is fresh off a runner-up finish in the 2006 Motor City Open last month in Michigan.

Antonio said he and Torre were wary of players who help each other, and were also not afraid to see their Elo rating go down when they lose games to lower-rated foes.

Aside from the GM, INQUIRER sources said two International Masters, two National Masters, one untitled player and a lady chesser were involved in game-fixing during the Tanauan Open, the Inter-Provincial in Cagayan de Oro City and National Open last month in Surigao del Sur.

Lawyer Samuel Estimo, executive director of NCFP, said another form of "game-fixing" in the sport is called "networking."

Usually applied in Swiss system events, the process allows a player to determine who will win a nine-round tournament as early as the sixth round.

This allows what is known as the "Russian group" to monopolize all the major awards by manipulating game results.

Estimo said the game-fixing issues will be brought to the Internal Affair committee under NCFP director and former Benguet governor Raul Molintas for investigation.

Olympic hopefuls' scrutiny starts today

By Marc Anthony Reyes

WHO WILL MAKE IT TO THE OLYMPIC TRAINing program?

That will be the main point of discussion when officials of the Philippine Sports Commission and the Philippine Olympic Committee sit down with heads of national sports associations (NSAs) today at the PhilSports complex in Pasig City.

The initial meeting hopes to thresh out details of the plans and programs of the 12 NSAs whose top athletes will gets slots in the Beijing Olympics training program that will fire off late this month.

PSC commissioner Richie Garcia said they already have an idea who among the athletes will be tapped for the program that will be bankrolled by First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo.

"More or less, we know who will be sent based on the Asian Games performance," said Garcia.

If they go by the Asiad performance, Asian Games boxing gold winners Violito Payla and Joan Tipon and taekwondo silver medalists Toni Rivero and Thsomlee Go are expected to be chosen.

Still, PSC chair William "Butch" Ramirez said boxing and taekwondo—two of the brightest spots in the country's Olympic gold medal hopes—will first have to hurdle their qualifying events scheduled within the next 18 months.

Credentials of candidates

Aside from the two combat sports, other associations invited in today's meeting are athletics, swimming, diving, archery, fencing, tennis, weightlifting, gymnastics, shooting and wushu, which is a demonstration event in Beijing.

Ramirez said the training program proponents want to hear inputs from the NSA heads, especially on the credentials of the candidates.

The early plan is for at least 30 national athletes to go through the Olympic program which will take them to training camps abroad as early as March, with a brief break for the Thailand Southeast Asian Games.

Ramirez said he will accompany Mr. Arroyo to China late this month to establish ties with Chinese sports officials as well as explore training camps for swimming, diving and fencing.

At around the same time, POC officials led by president Peping Cojuangco will leave for the United States to also pave the way for the training there of some athletes in the program.

Jinggoy still part of SBP, says Pangilinan

By June Navarro

AS FAR AS THE SAMAHANG BASKETBOL NG PILIPinas is concerned, Sen. Jinggoy Estrada is still part of the three-man panel that formed the new organization.

Lawyer Marivic Añonuevo, who helped craft the constitution and bylaws of the SBP, yesterday said Estrada would remain the president of the Basketball Association of the Philippines unless the same group that voted for him moved for his ouster.

The BAP executive board fired Estrada as president last Saturday and declared the position vacant. BAP executive vice president Christian Tan succeeded Estrada.

"Under the law, it will take the same membership which installed the senator as president to oust him," said Añonuevo during yesterday's SBP press conference at the Shangri-La hotel in Makati City.

But Estrada, who obviously felt slighted by the move, instead called on the BAP to resume its talks with the PB.

"I'm confident that they will join (the unification process), so I'm not closing the door on them," he said. "If the BAP doesn't need me, I'm offering my services as a senator to unite basketball in this country."

The BAP board charged Estrada of failing to consult the organization before striking a deal with business tycoon Manny V. Pangilinan. In the Estrada-Pangilinan agreement, the senator will preside over as chair while the PLDT top honcho will be the president of the SBP.

"In fairness to the senator, he's in constant touch with the BAP officials when we reached the agreement in Hong Kong," said Pangilinan. "He's always on the phone talking to somebody during the meeting.

"The impression that he sold out BAP is not true."

SPORTSWATCH

Blu Boys strengthening team for 2007

THE PHILIPPINE BLU BOYS SQUAD WILL OPEN ITS DOORS TO A NEW SET of coaches. Amateur Softball Association of the Philippines (Asaphil) president Jean Henri Lhuillier said they are hoping to attract the best talents available. "We would like to provide the opportunity for aspiring coaches to be part of the Blu Boys' campaign for this coming year. Applicants must submit their bio-data together with a comprehensive development program for the Blu Boys' covering recruitment, skills training and conditioning. Short-listed applicants will be asked to present their plans before the Asaphil board of directors. Requirements should be submitted on or before Jan. 15.

Kwok leads Checkmate's foreign bids

ELEVEN-YEAR-OLD MALCOLM KWOK WILL BANNER THE MILO CHECKmate chess team's campaign in the United States and Asia in May and June. Joining the seeded Kwok are Roy Aldous Coronel, Lev Abug, Adrian Co, Vincent Joseph Fuerte, Marie Antoinette San Diego, Steven Teves, Tristan Dandan, Jose Marti Caniones, Mary Joyce Fuerte and Carlo Caranyagan. Coronel of Immaculate Mother School downed Kenneth Co of Xavier School in 25 moves of a Ruy Lopez game in the fifth and last round to rule the 12-under section and gain the first of 11 contested slots in the pre-qualifying Sunday at St. Francis Square in Mandaluyong City.

Leveling for Yonex Tour-Cebu extended

LEVELING FOR PLAYERS SEEING ACTION IN THE CEBU REGIONAL championship of the Yonex-Sunrise Badminton Tour has been extended to accommodate late entries. Organizing committee chair and Philippine Badminton Association (PBA) grassroots development program chief Errol Chan said registration is still open for the second leg of the Yonnex Tour. He said host Portside Badminton Center extended the leveling phase to this weekend to give players coming from as far as Butuan City and Manila a chance to compete in the tournament proper. The main draw is set Jan. 26-28. Members of the national team, including Therise Chan and Lloyd Escoses, lead the stellar cast in the elite division of the tournament with five levels for boys and girls doubles, singles and mixed doubles.

'Fastest win' at Roligon stakes P500,000

SOME 200 SMALL-TIME BREEDERS AND COCKERS CONVERGE AT Roligon Mega Cockpit in Parañaque City this Saturday as the Big Event Fastest Win One-Cock Ulutan unfolds with P500,000 at stake. Hosts Bigboy and Ronnie Lacsina pegged the entry fee at P2,200 and the minimum bet, P2,200. The battles start at 7 a.m. with each fight winner getting P1,000. The top three major prizes are P100,000 for the fastest win champion, P70,000 for second place and P35,000 for third. Meanwhile, two entries topped the Noche Buena 5-Cock Derby last Saturday, the Scat Jam March 11 LPC entry of Maruel Terubias and D'Brothers of Art and Dan Lacsina.

MANNY Pacquiao, the reigning NCA champion, and US titlist Joe Walcott hold their prized cocks at yesterday's press conference. With them are (from left) Rep. Iggy Arroyo, Larry Whitehead, Tom Cooper and Binibining Pilipinas International 2004 Margarette Ann Bayot.

Pacquiao the cocker shoots for another NCA world title

BOXING HERO MANNY PACQUIAO HAS SET his sights on winning the National Cocker's Association (NCA) World Championship Derby which kicks off today at the Pasay City cockpit with Sagupaan Complexor as sponsor.

"I am confident I will win the NCA championship derby," Pacquiao said at yesterday's press conference at the Edsa Shangri-La hotel.

Pacquiao said he prepared long and hard for the NCA world championship, which has long been dubbed as the "Olympics of Cockfighting."

Foreign participants describe the derby as the toughest and most prestigious in the world. The NCA, for its part, is well known for its policy on fairness, honesty, integrity and sportsmanship.

But the fightingest Filipino boxer of all time has to contend with the biggest names in cockfighting in the United States.

Larry Whitehead, Joe Wolcott, Tom Cooper, Eddie Odell, Dan Gray and Jeff Hudspeth—the big guns in US gamefowl breeding and cockfighting—set out as co-favorites to win the NCA championship trophy.

Top American cockers Gene Batia, Jimbo Cox, Damon Yorkman, Andy Robertson, Red Lawson, Rey Morrison, Richard Borris, Chuck Halbert, Richard Lanier, Paul Pasot, Jason Campbell, Bryan Cochran, Joe Sanford, Crow Grave, Larry Barletta, and Fil-Ams Rene Medina and Ric De Guzman are also in the fold.

The Filipino contingent, however, is expected to give up a good a fight and is fielding its aces in the derby.

Part of the proceeds of the world championship will go to the NCA's scholarship fund for underprivileged college students.

St. Benilde-St. Francis beach volley final on 9

THE CHAMPIONSHIP MATCH BETWEEN Colllege of St. Benilde Team 1 and St. Francis of Assisi College in the PCSO Women's Intercollegiate Beach Volleyball Challenge will be featured in Golf Power Plus at 4 p.m. today on RPN-9.

The game was played at the beach volleyball court of the Cantada Sports Center in Taguig City.

Golf Power Plus is aired nationwide on RPN-9 and worldwide on ABS-CBN's The Filipino Channel/Pinoy Central TV.

Fistorama airs at 3 p.m., also on RPN-9, and is aired twice weekly worldwide through ABS-CBN's The Filipino Channel/Pinoy Central TV.

Fistorama features action-filled amateur bouts.

RACING

BY TOP CHOICE

Race 1—(Qrt/Tri)—Hurry Prince (6), Top Quest (8), Fine Offer (4), Papillon/Seve Lakes (3)

Race 2—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Head Turner (3), Blitzkrieg (9), Just A Moment (2), Piroutte (1), Hoy Sobra Na (7)

Race 3—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Friendly Venture (1), Dona Nene (7), Don Ramon (6), Ferrarione (5)

Race 4—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Dynamic Jason (1), Ginja (11), Dancing Slew (10), Gutsy (13), Daddy's Girl (12)

Race 5—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Visionary (7), Color My World (11), Italia (9), Golden Rice (13), Harry My Love (12)

Race 6—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Kawiliwili (8), El Cid (12), Loaded (10), Earth Angel (5), Caroline Belle (11)

Race 7—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Miss Malabon (8), Desert Breeze (6), Latin Music (1), Top Most (14), Iron King (11)

Race 8—(Super 6/Qrt/Tri)—Real Black (10), Sambat (8), Manila's Style (11), BMT Baby (12), Triple Threat (1), Saptenarian (6)

Singh finds more zing with romp

KAPALUA, HAWAII—VIJAY SINGH CLOSED the door on a frustrating 2006 campaign by winning the opening event of the 2007 PGA Tour season on Sunday.

Hard work to rectify swing problems towards the end of last year paid dividends for the Fijian as he sealed a two-shot victory at the Mercedes-Benz Championship.

"Life doesn't stop at 40, it just begins I guess," Singh, 43, told reporters after holding off a late challenge by Australia's Adam Scott with a three-under-par 70 at the Kapalua Resort.

"It hasn't been easy. Once I've turned 40, I've probably picked up my training and my practice even more. My physical training has been a lot more intense." Known for his workaholic approach to the game, Singh believes he has never been in better shape.

"I'm feeling pretty good," he said after clinching his 30th PGA Tour title. "I'm very, very comfortable with not only my body but my golf swing.

"A little bit more aches and pains than I had two years ago, but I've been going at it very, very hard. That's why I've got to be very, very careful in what I do. I cannot overdo myself.

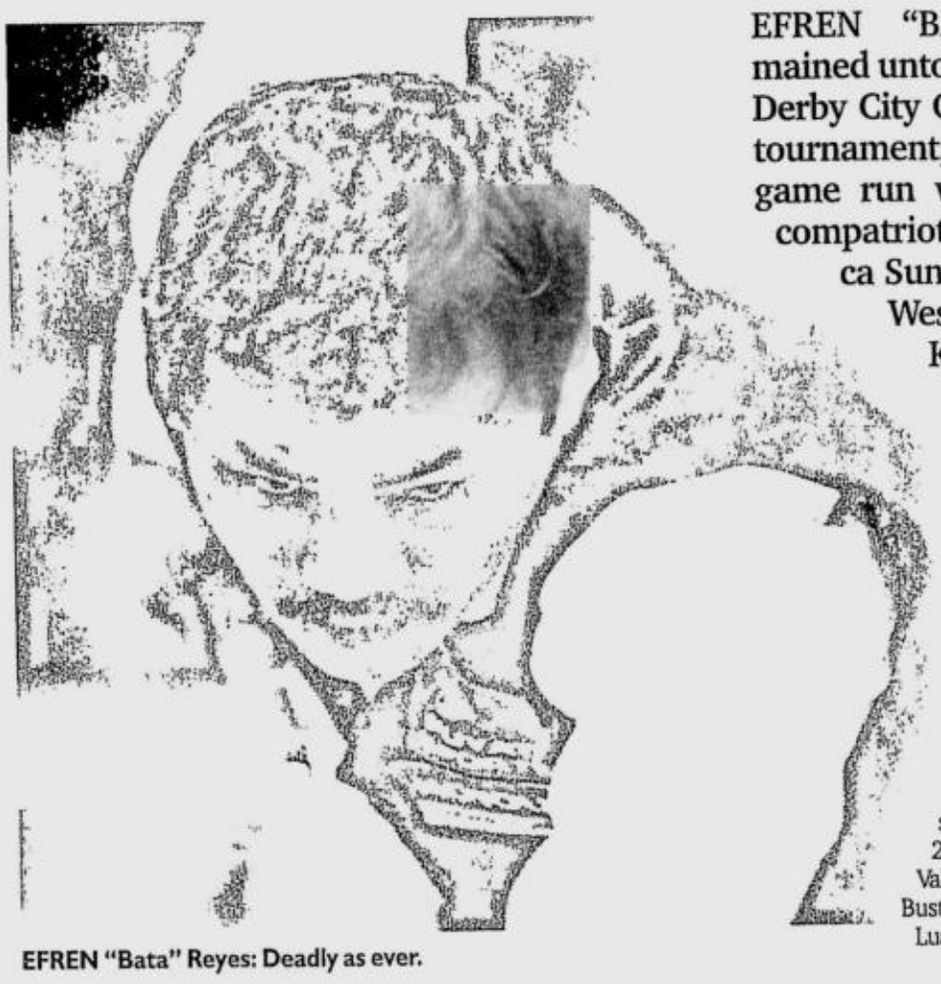
Although Singh moved past Sam Snead as the Tour's most prolific winner after the age of 40 with his 18th title, that record means very little to him.

Far more significant for the former world number one is how elusive the game can be at the highest level.

Singh ended Tiger Woods's five-year reign at the top in September 2004 before ending that season with a remarkable haul of nine victories. Before this week, he had slipped to seventh in the rankings. *Reuters*

DERBY CLASSIC 9-BALL

Reyes unscathed at 7-0; Luat, Sambajon second



EFREN "Bata" Reyes: Deadly as ever.

EFREN "BATA" REYES REmained untouchable in the 2007 Derby City Classic's 9-Ball Bank tournament, capping a four-game run with a victory over compatriot Jose "Amang" Parica Sunday at the Executive West Hotel in Louisville, Kentucky.

The 52-year-old Reyes, the defending champion, also won over Mac Ashby, Jr. Cueco and Peter Ohman to preserve his leading position with an unblemished 7-0 card.

The loss eliminated Parica, who was earlier beaten by Rodolfo Luat to stay in second place at 6-1 with California-based Filipino Santos Sambajon.

Also bowing out of contention after absorbing second setbacks were Dennis Orcollo (4-2), Lee Van Corteza (3-2), Gandy Valle (2-2) and Francisco "Django" Bustamante (1-2).

Luat and Sambajon had one loss each but they remained in the running through the one-time Buy-In option, which allows the loser to go to the next round by paying $50 each.

The 50-year-old Luat, the SMB Asian 9-ball tour Taiwan leg winner last year, beat Parica, Dave Matclock and Shannon Murphy in rounds 4, 5 and 7. He stumbled against Victor Ignacio in round 6.

Sambajon, the 46-year-old from Macalelon, Quezon, clustered six wins after losing his initial round to former WPC champ American Earl "The Pearl" Strickland.

After hurdling Jon Morra and ousting Bustamante in the third round the other day, Sambajon bested Harold McAbee, Manuel Chau, Larry Nevel and Rob Saez to stay alive in the unique 9-Ball competition in the $100,000-plus series being held in the hometown of boxing great Muhammad Ali.

Valle lost for the second time against George Breedlove, husband of Jeannette "The Black Widow" Lee in the fourth round while Orcollo bowed to Jeff Clay in the sixth.

It was a sad departure for Corteza, the 2006 All Japan Championship winner, who won his first three matches then suffered back-to-back loses to Jamie Farrell and Harry Platis in the fourth and fifth round, respectively.

Other favorites still in contention were Americans Strickland, Charles Bryant, Charlie Williams, Buddy Hall and Gabe Owen and Germany's Thorsten Hohmann, the former WPC titlist. *Marlon Bernardino, contributor*

TIGER Woods

PGA Tour commish still upbeat on FedEx Cup

KAPALUA, HAWAII—WHILE DISappointed by the absence of Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson from the inaugural FedEx Cup's opening event, PGA Tour commissioner Tim Finchem is excited about the Tour's much-trumpeted new era.

This week's Mercedes-Benz Championship launches a season-long points competition which culminates in a four-event playoff series with $10 million to be won by the overall champion.

"I don't want to sound like I'm trying to sugarcoat things, because I'm not," Finchem told a news conference at the Kapalua Resort on Sunday.

"I am disappointed. Having a smaller press core here and less eyeballs because Tiger Woods is not at an event is not something that's a positive any week he doesn't play.

"But having said that, somebody's going to be leading the FedEx Cup tonight, and it's not going to be one of those two guys (Woods or Mickelson).

"That's a certain dynamic that will play out as the course of the year goes."

World number one Woods and Masters champion Mickelson opted not to play in the elite event which brings together all the title-holders from the previous PGA Tour season.

Woods felt he needed another week of tournament preparation and wanted to spend more time with his wife Elin, who is expecting their first child this year.

Left-hander Mickelson, the tournament champion in 1994 and 1998, has not played in Kapalua since 2001.

Finchem, speaking during the final round of the Mercedes-Benz Championship, said he was excited about going through the FedEx Cup process for the first time.

"I think it's going to be fun," he added. "Everything tells us that we are on the right track, and we are just excited to get this first one down and get our fans an actual list of points.

"It's an evaluation process of every week and what it means, and lots of storylines are going to float out of this, we think. And we're not going to know until this time next year how that really plays out.

Thirty-six tournaments will make up the regular season before the big-money playoffs are held, ending with the Sept. 13-16 Tour Championship in Atlanta, Georgia for the top 30 players.

Between Sept. 20 and Nov. 4, a Fall Series of seven tournaments will finalise the leading 125 players who automatically earn full exemption for the 2008 PGA Tour.

Finchem brushed aside speculation that players hunting playoff spots might have to negotiate rigorous tournament schedules after the Aug. 2-5 WGC-Bridgestone Invitational in Akron, Ohio. *Reuters*

Catalan: Boxing's loss is wushu's gain

By Cedelf P. Tupas, *Inquirer Visayas*

HE WAS PITTED AGAINST FIGHTERS WHO were a lot heavier than his 52-kilogram frame in preparation for the biggest tournament of his career.

But Rene Catalan hardly complained.

"There is no gain without pain," Catalan, who won the country's fourth and last gold medal in the 15th Asian Games in Doha, Qatar, said. "My companions in the national pool gave me a real hard time. I had sparring partners (who weighed) as much as 70 kg. But all the training came in handy in Doha."

Skilled in muay thai, taekwondo, judo and boxing, Catalan admitted he became even more motivated to become a champion when he heard the government was offering a P1.5 million incentive to the Doha gold medalists.

"I wanted to help my newly widowed mother and my four younger siblings, who are still in high school," Catalan said.

> 'I wanted to win so I could offer my victory to my father, too. I'm sure he's happy up there'

First Asiad medal

Rene's father, Rodrigo, who was a martial artist himself, died in November.

Showing strength that belied his height, Catalan, barely 5 feet 2, came away with a 2-0 victory over a lanky Vietnamese fighter to win his first Asiad medal.

"I wanted to win so I could offer my victory to my father, too," Catalan said. "I'm sure he's happy up there."

Born in Sta. Barbara, Iloilo, Catalan, 28, has nurtured the dream of seeing action in the Asian Games—not in the sport he has now mastered but in boxing when he was nine years-old.

"Definitely, it's still a dream come true," added the fighter, who has collected seven international wushu titles in a span of three years.

Before Doha, Catalan had ruled the 7th Wushu World Championship in Macau in 2003, the 6th Asian Championship in Yangon, Myanmar, the 2nd World Cup in Guangzhou, China, the 8th World Wushu Championship, the 23rd Southeast Asian Games in Manila in 2005 and the 3rd World Cup in Xian, China, in 2006.

Part of his incentive for his Asiad triumph was spent for the repair of his family home, the purchase of a second-hand passenger jeepney and five brand new motorcycles—two of which were given to his brother and a brother-in-law—to start their own tricycle business.

Some of his cash prize, he said, went to *"balato"* to friends and relatives. "They think I am as rich as Manny Pacquiao," he said smilingly, apparently referring to doleouts sought by neighbors, friends and relatives of the famous Gen-San boxer after his recent victories.

Catalan said he is looking forward to the cash incentives promised him by Iloilo Gov. Niel Tupas, Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Treñas and Santa Barbara Mayor Isabelo Maquino when he paid them courtesy calls last December.

Catalan said he wants to become an enlisted personnel of the Philippine Army. "I hope this time I can make it," he said.

A change in the Camp Peralta management in Jamindan, Capiz, derailed his plan in 2000 when he served as taebo instructor at the military facility.

Unable to get into the Army, Rene shifted his attention to wushu and joined the 7th National Championships in Pasig City, where he emerged champion in the 48-kg class. "I haven't played wushu competitively before," he said. "I just followed instructions on what to do during the match."

This year, Rene wants to make his presence felt in two major events—the 9th World Championship in China in November and the 24th SEA Games in Thailand in December.Playing in the Beijing Olympics is also on my priority list," he said, "although wushu is still a demonstration sport."

Catalan's skill has not gone unnoticed internationally. Sports officials from Yemen have approached the Filipino athlete to train their wushu players for a monthly pay of $1,000.

"That's tempting," he said, "but I still want to play for the country."

RENE Catalan

Patriots gun down Jets in playoff drive

FOXBORO, MASSACHUSETTS—NEW ENGland, winners of three of the past five Super Bowls, opened their National Football League playoff campaign Sunday with a 37-16 victory over the New York Jets.

A second contender from the Big Apple then fell by the wayside as the Philadelphia Eagles edged the New York Giants 23-20 to reach the second round.

The fourth-seeded Patriots will now play American Conference top seeds San Diego in the second round next week.

In a game that matched Patriots coach Bill Belichick against Jets protege Eric Magnini, New England utilized a varied offence that mixed Tom Brady's precision passing with an effective running attack and a defence that forced two critical turnovers en route to the American Conference wild card victory.

Mangini, who was an assistant under Belichick when the Patriots won NFL titles in 2001, 2003 and 2004, left New England to take over the Jets last January and orchestrated a turnaround from a 4-12 season to a 10-7 playoff run this campaign.

But Belichick preserved his record of never losing a home playoff game, a 7-0 mark that includes six victories with the Patriots.

"We just played a complete game today," Belichick said. "It wasn't perfect by any means, but we did a lot of good things. Our tight ends and running backs did a great job in blitz pickup." Brady, a two-time Super Bowl Most Valuable Player, threw for 212 yards and two touchdowns.

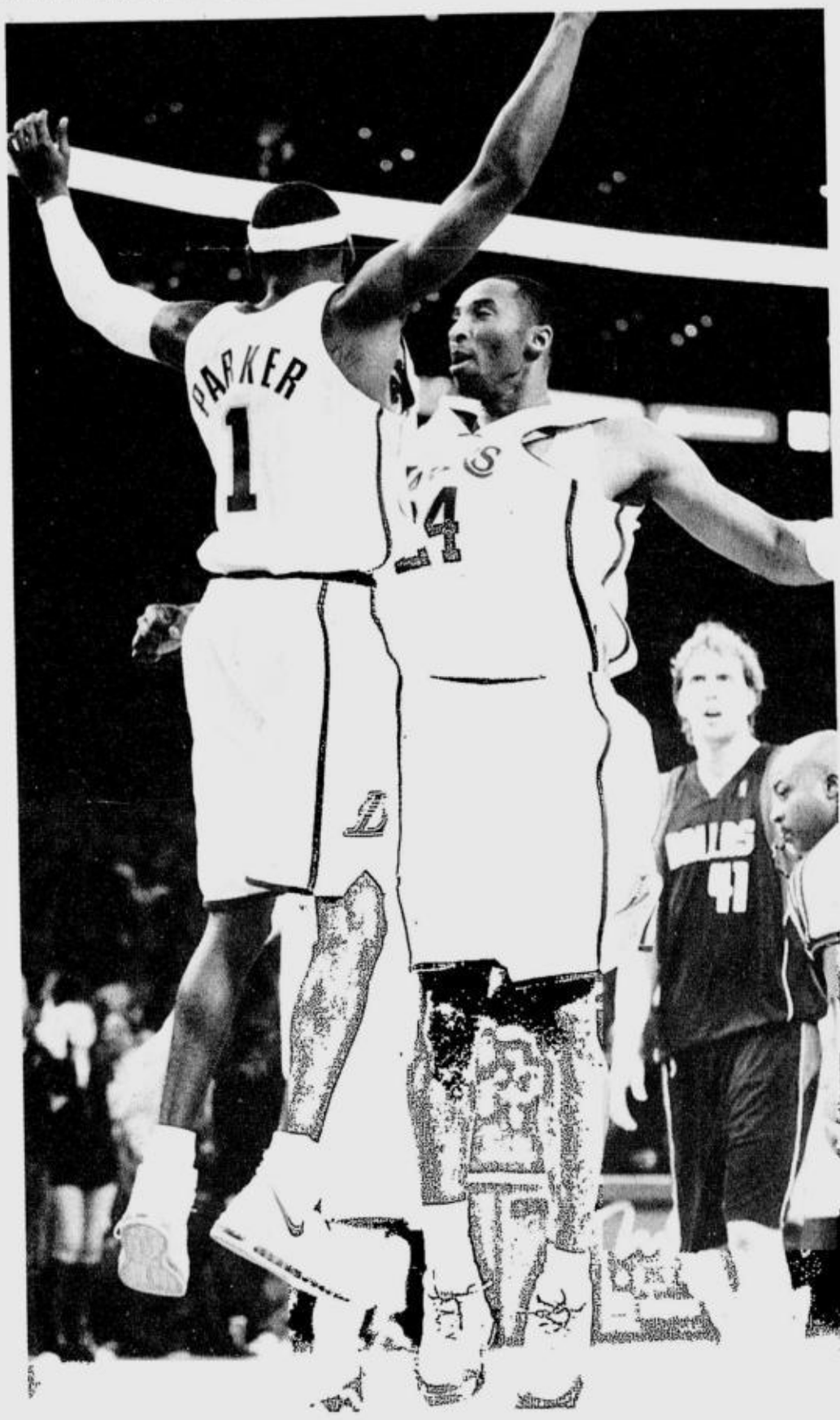
"I think we had a great plan," said Brady, who is 10-2 in his career against the Jets. "This is a pressure defence. They bring a lot of different blitzes and I think we were prepared much more for the pressure this time around." The backfield tandem of Corey Dillon and rookie Laurence Maroney combined to rush for more than 122 yards and Jabar Gaffney caught eight passes for 106 yards.

The Patriots also got some big plays from their defence.

Defensive tackle Vince Wilfork recovered a ball that was deflected by linebacker Rosevelt Colvin and returned it 31 yards to the New York 15.

That set up a 28-yard field goal by Stephen Gostkowski with four seconds left in the third quarter, giving New England a 23-13 lead. *AFP*

SPORTS



THE LAKERS' Smush Parker (left) and Kobe Bryant celebrate after a basket against the Mavericks on Sunday in Los Angeles. The Lakers won, 101-98. AP

Lakers halt Mavs' victory run at 13

Jackson nets 900th win as coach

LOS ANGELES—SASHA Vujacic scored nine of his career-high 16 points in the fourth quarter and the Los Angeles Lakers beat Dallas, 101-98, to snap the Mavericks' 13-game NBA winning streak on Sunday.

Kobe Bryant had 26 points, eight rebounds and six assists and Luke Walton scored 21 for the Lakers, who presented coach Phil Jackson with his 900th victory.

Jackson ranks ninth on the NBA's all-time wins list, and became the fastest to reach 900, doing so in 1,264 games. Former Lakers coach Pat Riley accomplished the feat in 1,278 games.

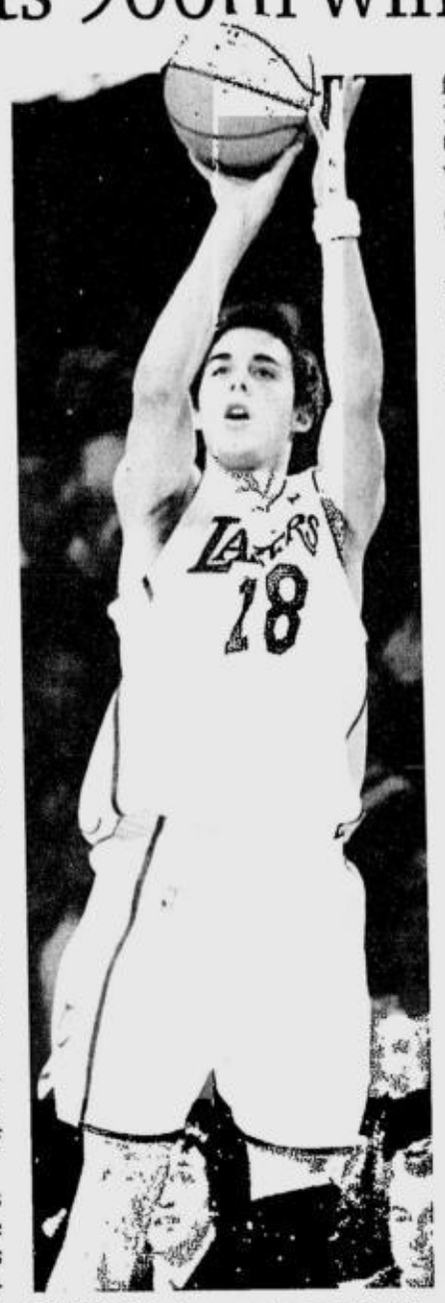
Dirk Nowitzki had 29 points and 13 rebounds, Josh Howard had 20 points and nine rebounds, and Jerry Stackhouse scored 14 for the Mavericks.

T'wolves 103, Rockets 99, OT

At Minneapolis, Kevin Garnett had 26 points and 13 rebounds, and Mark Blount continued his recent strong play for Minnesota adding 21 points and 10 rebounds.

The Timberwolves have won four straight, including the last three in overtime. They have won seven of their last nine overall.

Tracy McGrady scored 31 points for Houston, which saw its five-game winning streak come to an end. It was McGrady's fourth 30-point performance in Houston's previous five games. Shane Battier added 20 points for the Rockets and Juwan Howard 19. But Houston went 12-for-19 from the free-throw line while the Wolves were 34-for-40.



SASHA Vujacic scores the go-ahead 3-point basket down the stretch. REUTERS

Spurs 110, Grizzlies 96

At Memphis, Tennessee, Manu Ginobili scored a season-high 34 points to lead San Antonio.

Ginobili, who averaged 25.5 points in the previous two games, was 10-of-15 from the field, including 6-of-8 from 3-point range.

Robert Horry had 18 points to help San Antonio snap its first three-game losing streak of the season. Michael Finley added 12 points, and Tim Duncan and Bruce Bowen had 10 apiece.

The Spurs played without guard Tony Parker, who injured his right hip against Dallas on Friday.

Pau Gasol led Memphis with 24 points, and Mike Miller finished with 14.

Raptors 116, Wizards 111

At Toronto, Chris Bosh had 24 points and 15 rebounds to lead Toronto over Washington.

T.J. Ford, back after missing three games with a sprained right ankle, added 20 points for the Raptors, who had six players score in double figures.

Gilbert Arenas had 33 points, but went 7-for-19 from the field for the Wizards, whose three-game winning streak ended. *AP*

COMPLETE RESULTS: Toronto 116, Washington 111 ; Minnesota 103, Houston 99 (OT); San Antonio 110, Memphis 96; Orlando 87, Boston 79; Phoenix 128, Golden State 105; Miami 93, Portland 90; LA Lakers 101 , Dallas 98.

NBA on TV Today

9 a.m.—LA Clippers vs NO/OKC (replays at 4 p.m. and 9:30 p.m.)

Jankovic shows Hingis door in Sydney tourney 1st round

SYDNEY—FORMER WORLD NUMBER ONE Martina Hingis' Australian Open preparations were dealt an early blow on Monday when she was knocked out in the first round of the Sydney International by Jelena Jankovic.

The in-form Jankovic followed up her victory in Saturday's Auckland Classic final with a 6-4 4-6 6-3 win over Hingis, who suffered her second defeat in three days having lost the final of the Australian women's hardcourt championship to Dinara Safina.

Jankovic, of Serbia, should have wrapped up the match in straight sets after winning the first and racing to a 4-2 lead in the second before Hingis fought back.

The Swiss rolled off four games in a row to force the match into a deciding set with Jankovic began by showing signs of fatigue.

Jankovic called for a trainer and had her blood pressure measured but came out in the third set full of energy to run away with the decider.

"I just came from Auckland so I didn't have much time to recover, I was quite proud of how I managed to pull through," Jankovic said in a courtside interview.

Jankovic, who reached the US Open semi-finals last year in her best performance yet at a grand slam event, will play Australia's Samantha Stosur in the second round after she beat Russian Vera Zvonareva, 6-1 6-4.

Jankovic is ranked 12 in the world, five places below Hingis, but missed out on a seeding for Sydney because of the depth of the event, with Maria Sharapova the only player in the top 10 who did not enter the tournament.

World number one Justine Henin-Hardenne withdrew last week for personal reasons. *Reuters*

JELENA Jankovic: Quite proud REUTERS

Sharapova heads Russian charge

MOSCOW—US OPEN CHAMPION AND world number two Maria Sharapova will lead a strong Russian challenge in next week's Australian Open.

The 19-year-old Siberian heads a powerful Russian contingent which also includes world number four Svetlana Kuznetsova, sixth-ranked Nadia Petrova and eighth-ranked Elena Dementieva.

After triumphing at Flushing Meadows for her second grand slam title four months ago, Sharapova is eager to add the Australian Open crown to her impressive trophy case.

Success in Melbourne has an added incentive for the Florida-based Russian as she would then overtake Belgian Justine Henin-Hardenne as world number one.

Still, Sharapova has often said her main goal is to win titles rather than worry about the rankings.

"Personally, I don't feel it's a huge deal," she said referring to who might end up at the top of the rankings.

"I honestly don't remember who ends the year number one. You remember people who win grand slams."

The Australian Open is the only major that has so far eluded the Russian women but with seven of them in the top 20 they have a good chance to end the Melbourne jinx this year.

MARIA Sharapova: On track for world No. 1. AP

Russian men have not matched the success rate of their female compatriots in recent years.

However, 2005 Australian Open champion Marat Safin is particularly looking forward to playing at Melbourne Park after missing last year's tournament with a knee injury.

"This was a really bad year for me, probably the worst in my whole career," Safin said last month after beating Jose Acasuso in the fifth rubber to clinch Russia's second Davis Cup title with a 3-2 victory over Argentina in the final.

"I really hope to do well in 2007 and regain my rankings," said the former world number one, who last year tumbled out of the top 100 in the ATP rankings for the first time since making his professional debut as a 17-year-old in 1997.

Safin has always done well on the Melbourne hard courts, reaching the Australian Open final in 2002 and 2004 before winning it in 2005 for his second grand slam title.

World number three Nikolay Davydenko and 24th-ranked Mikhail Youzhny could also be a threat after both reached the US Open semi-finals last year on a similar surface at Flushing Meadows.

Another member of Russia's victorious Davis Cup quartet, the 22nd-ranked Dmitry Tursunov, is also capable of a good run. *Reuters*

Cuba seeks end to exodus of its boxing talents

HAVANA—CUBA HAS CALLED on its boxing authorities to stem the flow of talent that continues to quit the impoverished Communist nation.

Every year, Cuba loses some of its top athletes, particularly boxers and baseball players, who choose to escape the country for pastures new.

Many boxers, such as current WBC lightweight champion and 1992 Olympic gold medalist Joel Casamayor, find their way to the United States to start up professional careers that are banned under the regime of Fidel Castro.

Cuba is now trying to find a way to hold onto its greatest talents and boxing bosses have been told to set up an elite national squad "inside and outside the ring" to fend off the vultures.

Official state newspaper Granma said: "In various Olympic forums, such as the National Assembly of Olympic Committees and the Pan-American Sports Organization, Cuba has denounced the harassment that it's sports suffer at the hands of unscrupulous dealers, which it describes as a theft of talents."

It singled out the United States as the prime importer of boxing talent.

"In most cases, the traffickers illegally transfer sportsmen to the United States whose authorities show indifference," added Granma.

JOEL CASAMAYOR

The Cuban denunciation of this phenomenon took place just over a week before the beginning of the national championships.

Granma called for a "thorough revision" of boxing on the island nation without offering any clear details as to how it intended to hold onto talent that was barred from turning professional in its own country but could do so by escaping Cuba.

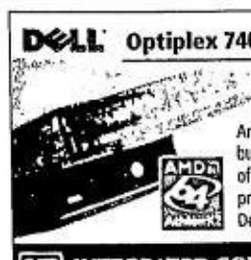
The national championships are particularly important as it is being seen as a vital tournament in determining the Cuban team that will head to Beijing next year for the Olympic Games.

Cuba is considered to be the top amateur boxing nation in the world and has an impressive history in the sport, claiming 32 Olympic gold medals. *AFP*

Ali fans urged to send birthday greetings

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY—FANS OF MUHAMMAD ALI CAN SEND PERSONAL greetings to the boxing great on his 65th birthday next week. Well-wishers can leave a message through the Muhammad Ali Center's website or get a picture taken with a birthday banner at the center on Jan. 17. School classes and groups are being encouraged to send group photos with signs or banners expressing their regards. Ali, who has Parkinson's disease, doesn't plan to attend the celebration, center spokeswoman Jeanie Kahnke said. AP

DELL Optiplex 740



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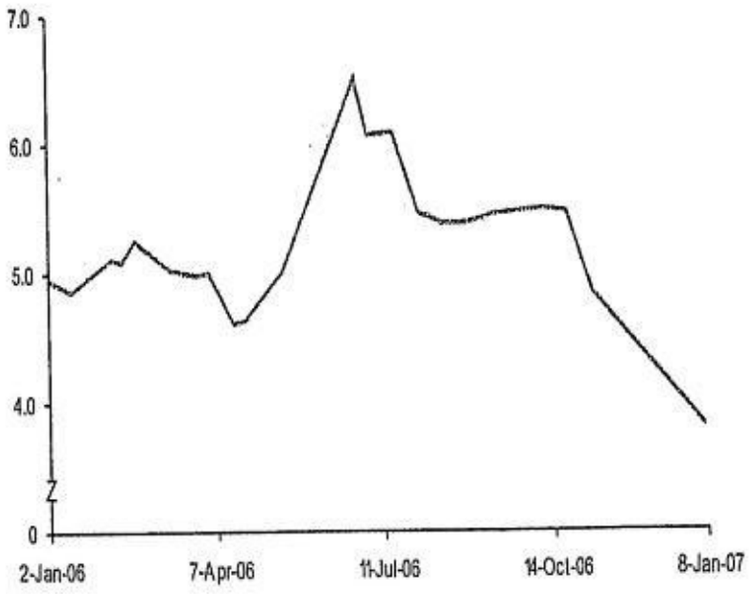
Treasury bill rates fall to all-time lows

91-day yield at 3.795%

91 DAY TREASURY BILL RATES
January 2, 2006 to January 8, 2007



By Michelle V. Remo

TREASURY BILL RATES FELL TO THEIR ALL-TIME LOWS YESTERday in what fiscal authorities said was due to "strengthening" economic fundamentals marked by excessive liquidity in the market.

The benchmark 91-day treasury bill yield touched the 3-percent level at 3.795 percent. This was 104.2 basis points lower than the 4.837 percent recorded in the previous auction in November (100 basis points is equivalent to one percentage points).

The rate for the 182-day bills fell by 92.1 basis points to 4.317 percent, while the 364-day bills dropped by 90.1 basis points to 4.604 percent.

Strong appetite for the short-term government securities was manifested in the huge volume of bids, which totalled P33.5 billion for all tenors compared with the government's debt offering of only P4 billion.

"This meant an oversubscription of more than eight times," National Treasurer Omar Cruz noted.

High amount of tenders encouraged the Bureau of the Treasury's auction committee to accept P4.8 billion worth of bids.

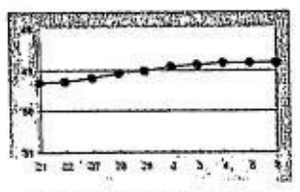
The latest rates broke the record low of 4.299 percent, 4.771 percent and 5.19 percent for the three-month, six-month and one-year bills, respectively, recorded in April 2002.

"This (drop in the rates) is bolstered by the government's improving fiscal position, which allowed it to adjust its borrowing requirements, the slowdown in inflation and stronger

TREASURY/ B2

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES

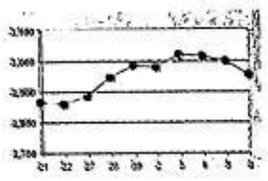


PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱ 48.835 = $ 1

As of 5 p.m., Jan. 8, 2006

STOCK MARKET



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Stocks close lower

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 1.47 percent lower yesterday, continuing to consolidate after recent gains with investors taking profits in select blue chips, dealers said.

Wall Street's weak performance on Friday further dampened sentiment, with investors also keeping track of other markets in the region amid fresh concerns of a contracting US economy this year, they said.

STOCKS/ B2

BSP seen lowering key interest rate this year

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS is likely to slash its overnight policy rates by 100 basis points (one percentage point) after it scraps its tiering system on short-term money within this year, Deutsche Bank said in its Asian outlook for 2007.

The German bank is also optimistic on Philippine local and offshore sovereign bonds this year, but expressed concern on the government's ability to meet its "ambitious" fiscal targets.

"The central bank's move last November to tier the rates it pays on its reverse repurchase (borrowing) facility has already effectively caused yields to decline by over 100 basis points, so we think the challenge for BSP in 2007 will be to transition from tiering to cutting headline policy rates," the German lender said.

The BSP's policy-making Monetary Board has kept its overnight borrowing rate at 7.25 percent and overnight lending rate at 9.75 percent since October 2005, but sanctioned a virtual monetary easing with the restoration of the tiering system since last November.

Tiering is a system wherein the BSP pays a lower rate on short-term money placed

BSP SEEN/ B2

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Bernanke's dilemma

MR. BEARBULL

Ron Nathan

A WEEK AGO, BERNANKE INDICATED THAT he was worried about inflation and one member of his team was advocating a rate hike. Last Friday, two pieces of news came out, which caused the DOW to plummet 99 points from its vulnerable 9-year high. First, the number of jobs created was 167,000, far above the economists' consensus figure of 100,000 and also above November's revised figure. This suggests that the economy is not slowing down dramatically and there is little danger of a hard landing or a recession. I am assuming that the figure is seasonally adjusted for the temporary workers taken on by the stores for Xmas. As a result, the dollar gained 0.7 percent against the euro and the pound and gold fell $19 an ounce, as they move in opposite directions. Silver dropped 5 percent and copper is at an 8-month low.

Bad news was to follow. The hourly wage earnings increased by 0.5 percent, the highest rate in 8 months and equivalent to an annual inflation rate of 4 percent. Bernanke's target is 1.8 percent though he would probably settle for 2 percent. If a similar increase is reported next month, there will be intense pressure on him to raise rates by 0.25 percent, as the main job of the FED is to control inflation, not the stock market. He will be very reluctant to take such a step as it would increase mortgage rates, adversely affect the housing market and send Wall Street into a tail spin. The best one can hope for is that the FED will hold rates for the next 6 months and then reduce them slowly.

This would have the effect of stimulating the equity market and weakening the dollar with a beneficial effect on commodity prices. So, although metal prices are weak, I do not see prices returning to the levels of 3 years ago, but consolidating around current levels. If US companies can pass on increases to consumers, bearing in mind intense competition from Asia, then profits are likely to continue growing at double digits and a recession is unlikely. If they cannot, then profit margins will be squeezed. We have jut seen Motorola miss its sales and profit forecast and the outlook for Ford and General Motors looks grim. Some tech stocks also look vulnerable.

I think that sending more US troops to Iraq is madness and will merely result in even larger casualties. The Sunnis and the Shiites hate each other but they hate the Americans even more. The majority of Americans want to see their troops come home and so do the Iraqis. This will turn out to be another Vietnam and I see little hope for the Republicans winning the next election.

I just returned form a relaxing vacation in Hong Kong and although I did not follow the local stock market, I read the South China Morning Post every day. Until now, China has been concentrating on Beijing for the Olympics in 2008 and Shanghai for the Expo in 2010, which is expected to attract 100 million people. They have also built up Shenzhen and Guangzhou to enormous cities. Currently, 35 percent of China's population live in urban districts and 65 percent in the poorer rural areas. The government is planning to reverse these figures by building many small towns of one million people over the next 10 years. This will mean continued rapid expansion, huge demand for concrete and steel and commodities like copper and nickel.

Hong Kong has become very expensive and you can buy everything much cheaper in Quiapo or the Divisoria. However, the quality of goods being produced is far better than it was years ago and I feel that it will not be long before China becomes a major player in all sectors of the consumer market. The Shanghai index jumped 130 percent in 2006.

I do not expect the PHISIX to repeat its stellar performance of last year. To do so would take the index to over 4,000 and I do not foresee that happening. The 1st quarter should be good, the government is raising $1 billion overseas in the next few weeks while interest rates are low and the budget deficit target of P128 billion will be beaten by a handsome margin, probably P40 billion or more. I expect the secondary issues from MEG and FLI to be taken up by foreign investors, enticing more companies to launch IPOs or raise money through right issues.

I am less happy about the 2nd quarter because that depends on what kind of election we have. If it is clean, all well and good, but if it is marred by killings and further accusations of cheating, then we could have a substantial correction. In England, we have a saying, "Sell in May and go away." It could be applicable here too.

The 3rd quarter will be influenced by the 2nd quarter but Wall Street should start picking up in the second half, stimulated by rate cuts, so the year should end on a firmer note. If we reach the Jan. 9, 1997, level of 3,420, we will be doing well but this does not say much for long-term investing if it takes 10 years merely to get your capital bank.

Actually, the situation is worse than that because the PSE periodically removes the worst performing stocks and replaces them by better stocks. It would be interesting to have the 1980 index. Secondly, no allowance has been made for 10 years of inflation. Adjusting for that, the index is probably less than half of its previous high in real terms.

Last Thursday, the risk factor reached 100 and I told subscribers to take profits and not to reposition for the New Year. Since then, the market has fallen every day and I am happy just to sit on the sidelines. I advise on a Charitable Fund with discretion to trade in any local stock. I made killings on PX at P1.64, sold at P4.80 and also MEG, bought at P1.38 and sold too soon at P1.88. Altogether, the fund was up over 100 percent so I beat the PHISIX by a handsome margin.

On Saturday, a friend hosted a birthday party for me in a beautiful hotel. I warned everyone not to let my wife drink any of the wine as it causes her to shed all her inhibitions. She managed to drink 3 glasses while I was cutting the cake and nobody was looking. Then she jumped on the table and proceeded to do a strip tease. Fortunately, before she could bare all, a waiter covered her with a large tablecloth and the girls hustled her away to the ladies room. I have never been so embarrassed and we will never be able to eat in McDonald's again.

In case you think my wife gets annoyed by all these comments, she takes it all in good part and even has every article I have ever written since 2001. She intends to publish them posthumously so that she can keep all the profit. *mrbearbull@hotmail.com*

BSP seen lowering key interest rate this year

From page B1

by banks in excess of certain threshold levels to encourage banks to lend out instead of parking all their funds with the monetary authority.

Deutsche Bank said it favored local bonds but would wait for a better opportunity, expected around the time when the BSP shall have removed its tiering, to enter the market.

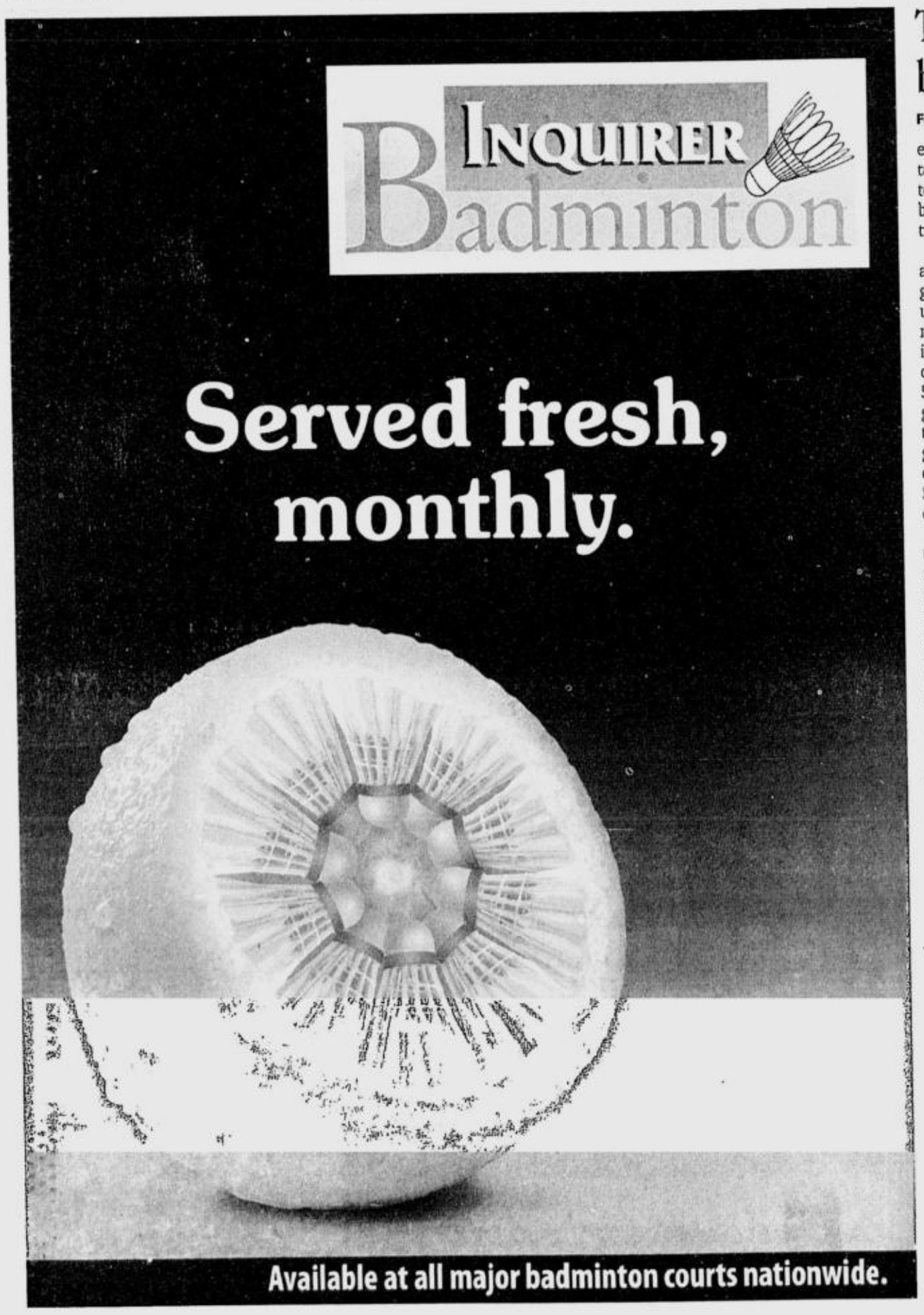
Overall, Deutsche Bank said the technical picture remained very strong for both local and external bonds but noted that it would be hard for the government to maintain its pace of fiscal momentum beyond the first few months of 2007 due to political risks arising from the congressional elections in May.

"(The bank) feels that the fiscal consolidation has come to an end in 2006, and projects the budget gap next year at P85 billion or 1.3 percent of gross domestic product (versus the P63 billion targeted by the government). This would put the budget gap, and hence the financing needs, at a similar level as in 2006, but with the funding mix skewed toward local markets, it could mean higher domestic issuance in absolute terms," the report said.

Structural transformation had been the theme in the Philippines for two years now, reinforced by political fatigue among the middle class and fiscal consolidation, the bank said.

It added that the peso had been bolstered by surging remittances from overseas workers, which also reflected strong global growth.

"BSP has welcomed this, as it allowed them to keep rates low and encourage the banking sector to re-initiate consumer and business lending," the bank said.



Treasury bill . . .

From page B1

economic fundamentals in general," Cruz told reporters in a briefing after the auction.

Economic growth, as measured by the gross domestic product (GDP), was estimated at 5.5 percent in 2006 from 5.1 percent in 2005. The 5.5-percent GDP growth forecast is at the low-end of the government's target of achieving between 5.5- and 6.3-percent economic expansion.

Cruz explained that the government's dwindling need for borrowings reduced the supply of government securities at a time when the market was awash with cash.

Stocks . . .

From page B1

The composite index lost 44.07 points at 2,952.32. It traded between 2,996.39 and 2,945.99.

Losers outpaced gainers 83 to 36, while 42 stocks ended unchanged.

Volume turnover totaled 3 billion shares worth P2.1 billion.

"Investors feel smug about breaking the 3,000 level last week; they believe some stocks have already reached their full value and decided to sell, and there appears to be no clear signs of a slowdown in selling at this point," said Lawrence de Leon of Accord Capital Equities Inc. *AFP*

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of Jan. 8, 2007)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	7.3	7.3	7.1	7.1	22,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	45	45	44.5	45	153,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	64.5	64.5	64	64.5	354,800
Citystate Savings Bank	19	19.25	19	19.25	400
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.45	0.46	0.45	0.46	1,170,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	81.5	81.5	80	80	19,700
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	52	52	51	52	824,900
Phil. Bank of Comm. A	55	55	54	54	1,500
Philippine National Bank	45	45.5	45	45	56,700
Phil. Savings Bank	48	48	48	48	2,500
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	24.75	25.5	24.75	25	186,000
Security Bank Corp.	66	66	66	66	700
Union Bank of the Phil.	48.5	48.5	48	48	27,800
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
ATR Kim Eng Fin. Corp.	2.08	2.08	2.08	2.08	40,000
Bankard Inc.	0.76	0.76	0.76	0.76	1,140,000
Citiseconline.Com Inc.	5.2	5.2	5	5	141,000
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	241,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2020	2020	2020	2020	40
Ivantage Corp.	1.66	1.66	1.64	1.64	1,190,000
INDUSTRIAL					
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
PNOC Energy Dev. Corp.	4.5	4.5	4.45	4.45	21,542,000
First Gen Corp.	55	55	54	54	118,800
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	66.5	68	66.5	68	725,100
Manila Electric Co. A	57	57	56.5	57	75,100
Manila Electric Co. B	59	59	57	58	500,900
Manila Water Co. Inc.	9.3	9.3	8.9	8.9	6,231,000
Petron Corp.	4.1	4.1	3.95	3.95	2,862,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.25	0.26	500,000
Salcon Power Corp.	1.78	1.78	1.78	1.78	20,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.16	1.18	1.16	1.18	593,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	7,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	20.5	20.5	20.5	20.5	57,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	43	43.5	42	43	134,100
RFM Corp.	1.04	1.08	1.04	1.08	1,075,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	25,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.33	0.34	0.33	0.34	110,000
San Miguel Corp. A	64	64	63.5	64	57,900
San Miguel Corp. B	74.5	75	74.5	74.5	436,400
Tanduay Holdings Inc.	3.8	3.9	3.8	3.9	35,000
Alliance Tuna Int'l. Inc.	2.22	2.24	2.16	2.18	995,000
Universal Robina Corp.	18.75	18.75	18.75	18.75	519,100
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	1.24	1.24	1.16	1.16	18,086,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	3.4	3.4	3.25	3.3	2,121,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	7.7	7.8	7.7	7.7	946,000
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp.	6	6.4	6	6.3	123,000
Republic Cement Corp.	4.2	4.2	4	4.1	856,000
CHEMICALS					
Chemrez Technologies Inc.	5.5	5.5	5.4	5.4	1,799,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.61	0.61	0.61	0.61	30,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Geograce Res. Phil. Inc.	0.7	0.71	0.69	0.7	19,180,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.22	0.225	0.215	0.22	18,750,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Asia Amalgamated Holdings	0.38	0.46	0.38	0.46	110,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.008	20,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	1,000,000
Ayala Corp.	560	560	545	555	153,600
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.64	0.64	0.63	0.63	250,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	7.7	7.8	7.6	7.7	1,070,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	6,500,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.95	2.95	2.9	2.9	100,000
APC Group Inc.	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	710,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	1.12	1.12	1.04	1.04	2,300,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	65,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	3.55	3.55	3.2	3.2	36,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	1.16	1.16	1.16	1.16	10,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	10	11	10	11	21,900
Benpres Holdings Corp.	2.65	2.65	2.5	2.6	18,131,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	6.5	6.7	6.5	6.6	1,955,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	4.35	4.4	4.25	4.35	1,772,000
F&J Princ.E Holdings Corp.	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	200,000
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.32	0.32	0.29	0.31	2,640,000
House of Investments Inc.	1.98	1.98	1.98	1.98	20,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	11	11	10.5	10.5	254,700
Medco Holdings	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	300,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	4.15	4.15	4	4	952,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	1.64	1.66	1.6	1.64	1,873,000
Pacifica	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	14,000,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	500,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.96	10,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.66	0.66	0.66	0.66	50,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.165	420,000
SM Investments Corp.	320	320	317.5	317.5	151,940
South China Resources Inc.	1.06	1.08	1.06	1.08	960,000
Seafront Resources Corp.	1.56	1.58	1.56	1.58	10,000
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co	0.3	0.3	0.29	0.29	2,250,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	100,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	15.75	15.75	15.25	15.5	50,095,300
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.45	0.45	0.43	0.43	210,000
Belle Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.16	1.16	4,509,000
A Brown Company Inc.	1.68	1.7	1.66	1.68	651,000
Cityland Development Corp.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	10,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.47	0.48	0.46	0.48	8,580,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	3.2	3.2	3.15	3.15	668,000
C & P Homes Inc.	1.4	1.4	1.36	1.36	1,013,000
Cebu Prop. Vent. A	1.86	1.88	1.84	1.88	52,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31	500,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.22	0.225	0.22	0.22	240,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.57	0.63	0.57	0.63	152,570,000
Edsa Prop. Holdings Inc.	1.58	1.58	1.56	1.56	189,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.0625	0.0625	0.0575	0.0575	8,100,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.72	1.72	1.68	1.7	23,731,000
Keppel Phils. Prop. Inc.	1.3	1.3	1.28	1.28	60,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.52	0.52	0.48	0.48	3,930,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.7	0.72	0.7	0.7	4,590,000
Metro Pacific Inv. Corp.	5.6	5.6	5.4	5.4	284,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.36	0.36	0.35	0.36	1,940,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	15.75	15.75	15.25	15.5	387,200
Phil Realty And Holdings	0.7	0.72	0.67	0.68	23,420,000
SM Development Corp.	3.1	3.15	3	3.05	1,952,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	11.75	11.75	11.5	11.5	8,587,200
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.0975	0.1	0.0975	0.1	2,100,000
SERVICE					
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	19.5	19.5	19.25	19.25	16,700
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	1	1	1	1	40,000
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	2.02	2.02	1.96	2	11,258,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	1255	1255	1250	1250	16,980
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	6.9	6.9	6.8	6.8	2,707,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	2500	2500	2450	2450	67,590
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.23	0.235	0.22	0.225	8,040,000
Imperial Res.	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.019	6,000,000
Ionics Inc.	2.24	2.36	2.24	2.36	3,340,000
IPVG Corp.	4	4	3.8	3.8	422,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.0525	0.0525	0.0525	0.0525	3,700,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.0575	0.06	0.0575	0.06	9,600,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.28	1.36	1.28	1.32	330,000
Transpacific Broadband	2.95	3.35	2.95	3.1	8,361,000
Philweb Corp.	0.034	0.034	0.033	0.034	195,400,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	150,000
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.42	1.66	1.42	1.66	2,087,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	21.75	22	21.5	22	513,900
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.94	0.94	0.93	0.94	210,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.26	1.26	1.22	1.22	200,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	2	2.06	2	2.04	1,235,000
Manila Jockey Club	3	3	3	3	102,000
Philippine Racing Club	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	216,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.6	0.61	0.6	0.61	100,000
EDUCATION					
iPeople Inc.	3.15	3.25	3.15	3.25	155,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	2.12	2.12	2.08	2.08	174,000
Paxys Inc.	19.25	19.25	19.25	19.25	93,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	5.7	5.7	5.4	5.4	1,079,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	5.9	5.9	5.5	5.6	491,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.011	67,500,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	9.6	9.6	9	9	1,355,000
Benguet Corp. A	9.1	9.1	9.1	9.1	9,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	2.8	3.1	2.8	2.9	225,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.26	0.26	0.25	0.26	13,170,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.27	0.28	0.27	0.27	1,690,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.024	0.024	0.023	0.024	675,800,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.026	0.027	0.025	0.027	274,200,000
Omico Corp.	0.014	0.014	0.013	0.013	942,600,000
Philex Mining Corp.	3.85	3.9	3.75	3.75	10,882,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	18	18	17.75	17.75	137,100
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.77	0.77	0.71	0.72	5,050,000
Vulcan Ind'l	1.54	1.54	1.44	1.46	7,570,000
OIL					
Basic Petroleum Corp.	0.28	0.29	0.28	0.29	260,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.012	0.012	0.011	0.012	262,700,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.013	0.013	0.013	0.013	57,600,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	1.1	1.12	1.08	1.1	982,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	1.12	1.12	1.1	1.1	739,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	9.8	9.8	9.7	9.7	42,000
PREFERRED					
Ayala Corp. Pref. B	110	111	110	111	12,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Y	10.75	10.75	10.75	10.75	100
WARRANTS, PHIL. DEPOSIT RECEIPTS, ETC.					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (PDR)	19.25	19.25	19	19	47,500
Metro Pac. Inv.- Warrants	4.1	4.1	4	4	637,000
SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES					
SQL*Wizard Inc.	2.16	2.16	2.16	2.16	38,000

CURRENCIES

January 8, 2007 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.768699	1.000000	48.8570
Japan	Yen	0.006482	0.008433	0.4120
United Kingdom	Pound	1.483742	1.930200	94.3038
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.098679	0.128371	6.2718
Switzerland	Franc	0.622327	0.809585	39.5539
Canada	Dollar	0.655718	0.853024	41.6762
Singapore	Dollar	0.500487	0.651084	31.8100
Australia	Dollar	0.598349	0.778392	38.0299
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.038935	2.652450	129.5907
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.204959	0.266631	13.0268
Brunei	Dollar	0.498863	0.648971	31.7068
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000085	0.000111	0.0054
Thailand	Baht	0.021580	0.028074	1.3716
UAE	Dirham	0.209300	0.272279	13.3027
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.300900	63.5581
Korea	Won	0.000823	0.001071	0.0523
China	Yuan**	0.098492	0.128128	6.2599
Argentina	Peso	0.249821	0.324992	15.8781
Brazil	REAL	0.356705	0.464037	22.6715
Denmark	Kroner	0.134179	0.174554	8.5282
India	Rupee	0.017391	0.022624	1.1053
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.219002	0.284900	13.9194
Mexico	New Peso	0.070320	0.091479	4.4694
New Zealand	Dollar	0.527264	0.685918	33.5119
South Africa	Rand	0.106468	0.138504	6.7669
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023587	0.030684	1.4991

FLI offering 5.4B shares

FILINVEST LAND Inc. said it would market up to 5.4 billion common shares mostly to foreign investors in a roadshow that started yesterday and end on Jan. 19.

INQUIRER sources said the targets were investors in other Asian countries, Europe and the United States.

The original plan was to offer 7.3 billion shares. However, the number dropped to 5.4 billion after Singapore Investment Corp., which owns 6.7 percent of FLI, junked an earlier plan to sell its stake.

Of the total shares to be offered, 3.7 billion are new shares and 1.7 billion shares are coming from Filinvest Alabang Inc., which owns 37 percent of FLI.

About 5.13 billion shares or 95 percent of the offering will be sold to international investors, while 270 million secondary shares will be offered to brokers.

Up to 809.85 million will cover a "greenshoe option" or an offering of additional shares.

FLI's board also approved the computation of the offer price based on a volume-weighted average trading price of the shares for 10 trading days ending Jan. 19, subject to a discount of 10 percent.

FLI closed at P1.70 per share yesterday.

Elizabeth L. Sanchez

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Minimum Qualifications:
- Personal net worth of CAD$ 150,000 (roughly, PHP 6,000,000)
- College graduates with significant years of business ownership or senior management experience
Informal briefings will be held at Suite 1206, 12th Floor MCS Tower, Makati Cinema Square, Don Chino Roces Avenue, Makati City on:
- Thursday, January 11, 6:00 p.m.
- Saturday, January 13, 10:00 a.m. & 1:00 p.m.
Mr. Dale Thompson, our president and senior consultant, will conduct the briefing. He is a member of the Canadian Society of Immigration Consultants (CSIC).
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Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
National Capital Region
DY Int'l Bldg., 1650 San Marcelino
cor. General Malvar St., Malate, Manila

NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with this Regional Office application/s for Alien Employment Permit/s:

Name and address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National	Position
SUNG SHIM INTERNATIONAL INC. U19 Arrowhead Plaza, No. 31 President Ave., Parañaque City	Jun Hee Park (w/o Kim)	General Manager
HONG KONG CHEF SEAFOOD RESTAURANT, INC. Unit A-05 & A-06 HK Sun Plaza, Roxas Blvd., Pasay City	Wah Ping Ng	Specialty Chef
HONG KONG CHEF SEAFOOD RESTAURANT, INC. Unit A-05 & A-06 HK Sun Plaza, Roxas Blvd., Pasay City	Sze Hoi Chan	Specialty Chef
SANDIGAN SHIP SERVICES INC. 9/F Salustiana Bldg., Perea St., Paseo de Roxas, Makati City	Takafumi Oishi	Assistant Superintendent
AUSTRALASIAN PHILIPPINES MINING, INC. No. 3 Tolentino St., San Lorenzo Vill., Makati City	Mike James Robbins	Vice President-Commercial

If you have any information/objection to the above mentioned application/s please communicate with the Regional Director.

for. LOURDES M. TRASMONTE
Regional Director

(PDI - Jan. 9, 2007)

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
SECURITIES & EXCHANGE COMMISSION
SEC Building, EDSA, Greenhills
City of Mandaluyong, Metro Manila

INVITATION TO BID
FOR THE SALE OF USED SEC SERVICE VEHICLES

The Securities and Exchange Commission, through its Disposal Committee invites qualified bidders/buyers to bid for OLD/USED SERVICE VEHICLES on a "AS-IS-WHERE-IS" basis, as follows:

ITEM No.	DESCRIPTION	QTY UNIT	MINIMUM BID PRICE
1	1997 Honda Civic, Model 1.6 Liter Vti-V-TEC, 4 Door with plate no. SEP-866	1	P 201,000.00
2	1994 Toyota Corolla XE 1.3 liters, Dark Bluish Gray with plate no. SEA-531	1	P121,000.00
3	1994 Toyota Corona EX 2.0 (Saloon), Red Mica with plate no. SEA-364	1	P151,666.67
4	1993 Toyota Tamaraw FX 1.5, 4Cylinder, Blue with plate no. SEA-471	1	P84,385.71
5	1993 Toyota Tamaraw FX 1.5, 4Cylinder, Blue with plate no. SEA-480	1	P84,385.71

The said vehicles may be inspected during office hours, Monday to Friday at the SEC Parking Lot behind the SEC Building Florida Street, Greenhills East Subdivision, San Juan City.

Bidding documents may be obtained at the General Services Division, Human Resource and Administrative Department, 4th Floor, SEC Building, EDSA, Greenhills, Mandaluyong City, upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Two Hundred Pesos (P200.00) starting January 10 to 24, 2007 from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. For further details, please call at Tel. No. 727-3320.

Pre-Bid Conference will be on January 12, 2007 at 2:00 p.m. at the CRMD Conference Room, 2nd Floor, SEC Building.

Deadline for submission of bids shall be on January 24, 2007, 10:00 a.m. at the General Services Division, 4th Floor, SEC Bldg. and immediately thereafter bids will be opened at the CRMD Conference Room, 2nd Floor, SEC Building.

The Securities and Exchange Commission reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any formalities therein and to award the Sale to a bidder whose proposal as evaluated is most advantgeous to the Commission.

The SEC also assumes no obligation whatsoever to compensate or indemnify any bidder for any expense or loss that may be incurred in the preparation of their bids, nor does it guarantee that any award will be made at all.

January 8, 2007.

(Sgd.) BENITO A. CATARAN
Chairman
Disposal Committee

(PDI - Jan. 9, 2007)

PROPERTY FOR SALE (CEBU)
ECOZONE PROPERTIES
New Cebu Township One (NCTO), Brgy. Cantao-an, Naga, Cebu

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(can be subdivided)

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BOARD OF INVESTMENTS dti

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that **International Tradewear, Inc.** with office and plant address at **# 42 Tirad Pass cor. Sto. Domingo, Quezon City** is applying for registration with the Board of Investments (BOI) as a **New Export Producer of Garments** on a **Non-Pioneer Status** with a capacity of **48,000 dozens per year.**

Any person with valid objection/s on the above-mentioned project may file his/her objection in writing, under oath, with the BOI within three (3) days from the date of this publication.

(Sgd.) RUDY B. CAÑA
Director
Project Evaluation and Registration Department

(PDI - January 9, 2007)

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Republic of the Philippines
NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Regional Office No. V
Legazpi City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO RE-BID FOR GRAINS HANDLING & OTHER RELATED WAREHOUSE HANDLING SERVICES FOR NFA REGION V

The National Food Authority, Regional Office No. V, Legazpi City, through its 2007 Corporate Operating Budget intends to apply the sum of P 18,991,200.00 being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the provision of grains handling and other warehouse related services in Region V for the calendar year 2007 based on the following:

Lot	Province	Location of NFA Warehouses	Estimated Volume to be Handled (Bags)	Estimated No. of Moves	Estimated Budget for the Contract (Php)
1	Albay	Ligao City	100,000	Maximum of 4 moves	P 1,040,000.00
2	Cam. Norte	Daet	276,000	Maximum of 4 moves	P 2,539,200.00
3	Catanduanes	Virac/Pandan	205,000	Maximum of 4 moves	P 2,132,000.00
4	Masbate	Masbate City	340,000	Maximum of 4 moves	p 3,060,000.00
5	Sorsogon	Sorsogon City/Bulan/ Irosin/Gubat	280,000	Maximum of 4 moves	P 2,576,000.00
6.	Cam. Sur	Naga City/Ocampo/ Inga/Libmanan	675,000	Maximum of 4 moves	P 7,020,000.00
	TOTAL		1,876,000		P 18,367,200.00

The prospective bidders are required to submit a Letter of Intent upon payment of a non-refundable application fee amounting to Php 500.00 as basis for the issuance of the eligibility and other pertinent documents required by the Regional Bids and Awards Committee (RBAC):

1. DTI business name / CDA registration and/or SEC registration, whichever may be appropriate;
2. Updated Mayor's permit and Official Receipt;
3. Names of manpower presently utilized for handling services (kabo's & laborers)
4. Eligibility criteria also includes the prospective bidders' largest single contract completed within the last 3 years and similar to the contract to be bid whose value adjusted to current prices using the wholesale consumer price index must be at least 50% of the ABC to be bid. For this purpose, a photocopy of the contract must be submitted for authentication.

The prospective bidders upon complying with the above requirements shall be allowed to purchase the bidder's documents from the RBAC secretariat upon payment of a non-refundable bidding fee of Php 2,000.00/lot.

The bidding of warehouse handling services at NFA Region V Legazpi City shall be governed by RA 9184 and its implementing rules and regulation.

The venue of bidding activities will be held on the 2nd Floor of the NFA regional office, Pier Site, Legazpi City on the following schedule:

ACTIVITY	DATE	TIME
1. Submission of letter of intent and issuance of eligibility requirements	January 8-17, 2007	8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
2. Deadline for submission of eligibility requirements	January 18, 2007	5:00 p.m.
3. Deadline for the issuance of Certificate of Eligibility	January 19, 2007	5:00 p.m.
4. Issuance of bid application and bid documents	January 9, 2007	8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
5. Pre-bid Conference	January 24, 2007	10:00 a.m.
6. Submission of bid documents/opening of bid	February 6, 2007	9:00 a.m.

For further inquiries, please contact the RBAC Chairman or Secretariat at NFA Legazpi City with telephone Nos. (052) 480-7933; 820-0018; 480-7015.

THE NFA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS THEREOF, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITIES OR DEFECTS FOUND THEREIN, OR TO ACCEPT SUCH BIDS OR TO AWARD TO ANY CONTRACTOR WHOSE BID IS CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE NFA OR TO THE GOVERNMENT.

(Sgd.) JOSE B. GUEVARA
RBAC, Chairman

(PDI – January 9 & 15, 2007)

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Calling all Alumnae of
Our Lady of Loreto College!!!
Our reunion / homecoming will be
on Sunday, Jan. 14, 2007
at Stella Maris College.
Lots of fun, surprises, and prizes are stored for you. Please join us and reminisce the good old days with our former classmates, advisers, sisters and teachers. Registration is at 8 a.m. followed with a mass.
For information please call the following:
Ann Foz - 7423201;
Josie Balbido-8090724;
Virgie Mendoza - 7160926;
Violy Moneda-7346269.

People, Events & Products

Acer intensifies CSR activities

ACER PHILIPPINES IS AT THE FOREfront in extending its support to deserving charitable institutions. Recently, the company embarked on two corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts to reach out and empower people.

With the aim of being actively involved in community services, Acer employees trooped to Quiapo church on one Tuesday in December. Quiapo church feeding is a regular program of Msgr. Josefino S. Ramirez. Some 1,000 people attended catechism after the 6 p.m. mass. Acer sponsored packed dinner that night. This activity was, made more relevant by the gift-giving season of Christmas.

Acer sought to give hope to its Filipino brothers by keeping the Christmas spirit alive even during these trying times.

In partnership with the Rotary Club of Manila Metro, Acer also donated desktop computers to the National Vocational Rehabilitation Center (NVRC).

The turnover of the computers took place during the 52nd Recognition Day of the Department of Social Welfare and Development's NVRC. It was entitled "Kapansanan ay Hindi Hadlang sa Kaunlaran Kung Sarili ay Tutulungan."

The NVRC provides rehabilitation programs and services to persons with disabilities (PWDs) and other special groups including the elderly and dependents of PWDs to live a useful and satisfying life. The NVRC is located in Project 4, Quezon City under the Department of Social Welfare and Development - NCR.

NVRC's courses include Consumer Electronics, Garment Trades, Food Management Service, Scientific Massage, Watch and Cellphone Repair, School Placement and Social Rehabilitation and some computer-related courses such as Computer Literacy, Computer Software Application and Computer Technology (Servicing).

ACER believes that Computer Literacy and Information Communication Technology (ICT) can help build our nation further. According to Acer Philippines Inc's finance and administration director Jennifer Teng-Chua, "Acer is happy to be of service to worthy institution and individuals such as the NVRC and its constituents. The visually-impaired need not lose hope. With today's technology, they too can be productive members of society. This is in line with Acer's vision of empowering people.

Acer has steadfastly advocated various CSR activities in 2006. For the coming year, Acer seeks to continue its CSR projects to well-meaning institutions and further promote goodwill by bringing technology closer to those that need it most.

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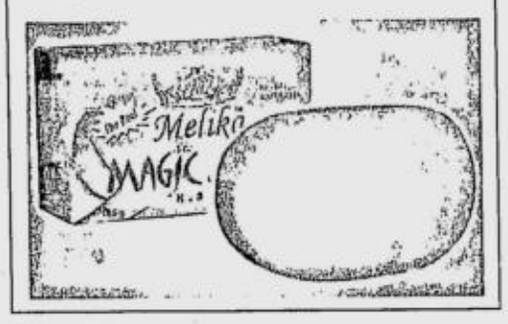


MOTORKINGDOM UNVEILS PITBULL VEHICLES

Motorkingdom Corp unveils the state of the art LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) Conversion Kit Pitbull Multi-Purpose Vehicles. A showcase of 8 different models from Pitvan 5-8 seater van, Pitney 14 or 18 seater jeep, Pit-up 750 kg pick-up capacity, Bradpit 6 seater pick-up with canopy 750 kg capacity 2X4 or 4X4, Pitboy 12 seater all-purpose transporter, Pitruck delivery aluminum truck, Pitcar 5 seater double cab commercial car and Pitstore 2 passenger rolling store customized body. Ranging from utility, family van to passenger type model and customized rolling store van for business. Huge savings on fuel consumption. Available in 4 modes of payment: cash, financing, credit card and rent-to-own. Visit Motorkingdom Showroom 149 Yakal St., San Antonio Village Makati and 3/F Yupangco Bldg. 339 Sen Gil Puyat Avenue Makati City. Visit their website www.motorkingdomplus.com. For inquiries, call: 811-0170

"I have fought the Fight
I have finished the Race
I have kept the Faith"
St Paul's 2nd letter to Timothy (2 Timothy)

ERNEST JOHN (E.J.) RUFINO LITTON

(January 4, 1959 – January 7, 2007)

passed into eternal life in the grace of our Lord
after receiving the Last Sacrament.

His wife **Tess Aguado**; children **Gel**, **Tara**, **Belle** and **Ernest Jr.**; parents **Johnny** and **Tere Rufino**; brothers and sister-in-law **John Jr.** and **Marlou Huibonhoa**, **Michael**, **Allan**, **Martin** and **Chris Cruz**; brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law **Kit** and **Susan Aguado**, **Let** and **Annette Aguado**, **Ding** and **Irma Aguado**, **Peachy** and **Carlo Bernasconi**; nephews and nieces and other relatives request your prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at the Capilla de la Virgen, Santuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park. Masses every night at seven until the 10th of January 2007.

Funeral mass and interment will be on Thursday, January 11 at 9:30 am at the Santuario de San Antonio Church.

In lieu of flowers, donations to KYTHE Foundation will be greatly appreciated.

"Even when I walk through a dark valley, I feel no harm. For you are at my side, your rod and staff give me courage..." Psalm 23:4

"Even when I walk through a dark valley, I feel no harm. For you are at my side, your rod and staff give me courage..."
Psalm 23:4

BEATRIZ MAYUGA MERCADO

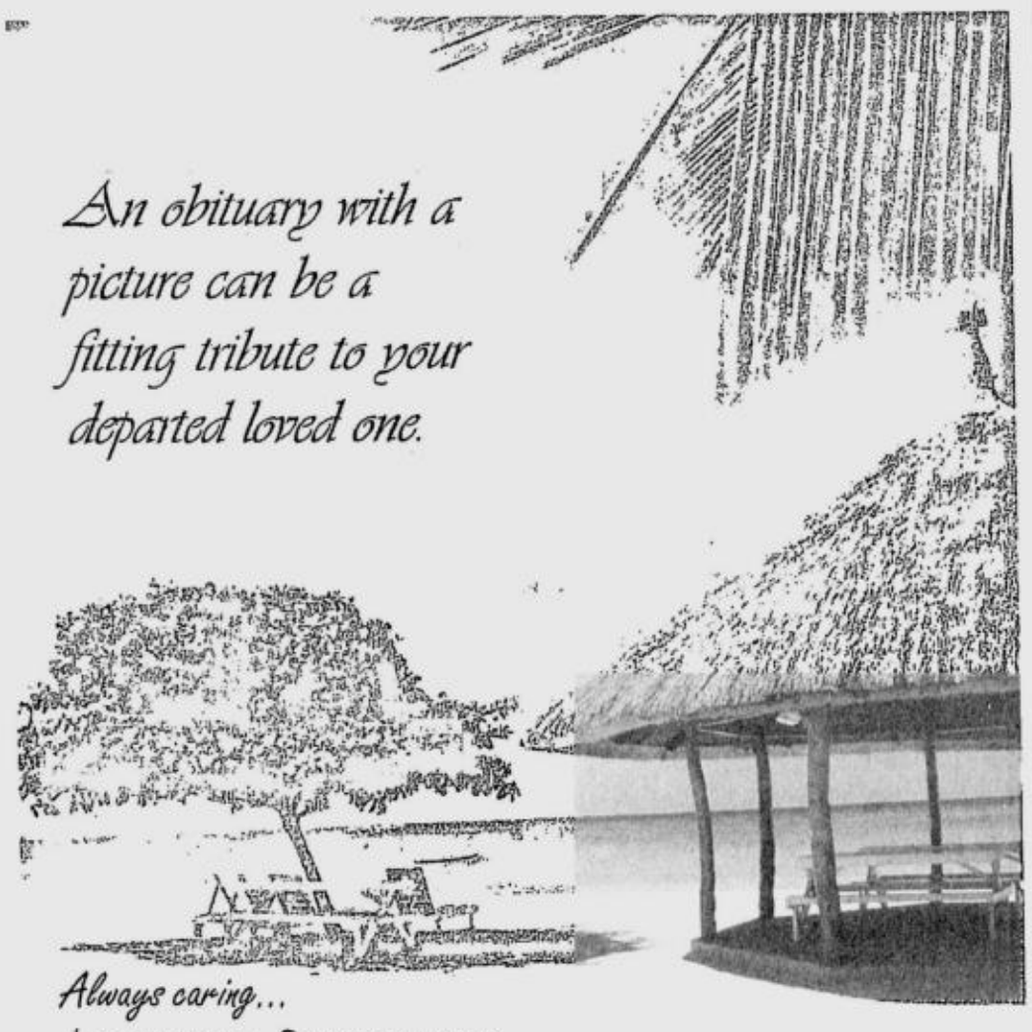
Former Instructor of Centro Escolar University, Manila
and PCCR, Manila

Now rests in the infinite warmth and embrace of our Lord.
She joined our Creator and her husband DIONICIO on the 5th of January at the age of 89.

Her bereaved children, MITA, TESS and TONI; son-in-law ROY, only grandchild BEATRIZ ANGELA "B"; brother JULIO; sisters ZENY, JOSIE, GUIA and CHING; in-laws LIN, OFELIA, ARNOLD and ROBERTO; all her nieces and nephews; other relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the Arlington Memorial Chapels, Inc., 12 G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Cremation will be on January 12, 2007 at 11:00 am at the Loyola Memorial Park Marikina Crematory. Inurnment to follow immediately at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Ossuary, Project 6, Quezon City.



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❷ Any identification document (I.D.)
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Former Consul-General
of San Francisco, California, USA
Founder Eastern Cavite Bankers Association
Former Chairman of the Board
& President of Masuwerte Rural Bank
of Bacoor (Cavite), Inc.

peacefully joined our Lord
on January 7, 2007 at the age of 93.

His loving wife ELENITA; daughters FLORINA MARITA and MA. EILEEN; son-in-law ROSAURO, relatives and friends, request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Capilla de San Francisco, Santuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park, Makati City.

Interment will be on Saturday, 13th of January 2007 at Manila Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque after the 12:30 p.m. Mass.

"I am the way, the truth and the life.
No one comes to the Father except through Me."
John 14:6

BUSINESS

Subic Freeport seen as shipbuilding hub

Proposed facility to cater to domestic shipping operators

By Ronnel W. Domingo

SUBIC FREEPORT IS SEEN BECOMING the country's shipbuilding center as the freeport authority and the government's investment arm are planning to put up a facility that would serve domestic shipping operators' vessel requirements.

The Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority said it was working with National Development Co. subsidiary National Maritime Leasing Corp. on a project that would form part of the government's domestic shipping development plan.

SBMA Chair Feliciano G. Salonga said the planned shipbuilding center would also be a part of the envisioned Subic Bay Maritime Industrial Park.

The project is expected to complement the $1-billion shipyard that South Korea's Hanjin Heavy Industries and Construction Corp. is putting up in the freeport.

Salonga said NMLC would provide assistance to local shipping operators in acquiring affordable but more efficient cargo and passenger ships.

For its part, SBMA would take part in the domestic shipping plan by developing a property with an area of at least 50 hectares for the ship building facility and by offering an affordable rental scheme to lower the cost of shipbuilding.

Salonga said SBMA was also banking on its existing operational integrated logistic facilities and systems—such as storage, loading and unloading, packaging, processing and information and transportation—to help shipbuilders lower their costs.

The agency would offer to investors incentives such as tax- and duty-free importation of capital goods plus a 5-percent corporate tax on gross income, unrestricted entry of foreign investments, no foreign exchange control, and income tax holiday.

NMLC said it was taking up the project with the SBMA due to the pressing need to build about 18 new tankers by next year for the use of local shipping operators through the so-called lease-to-own scheme.

NMLC was created as a leasing company to implement the Arroyo administration's Strong Republic Nautical Highway project through the acquisition of modern roll-in roll-out (Ro-Ro) vessels to be leased to qualified operators under lease purchase agreements.

A study of the Japan International Cooperation Agency showed that the Philippines had been using mainly second-hand and aging vessels, majority of which came from Japan .

The study found that the industry uses a total of 1,502 vessels including 28 container ships, 854 general cargo, 266 passenger/cargo, 149 Ro-Ro vessels and 205 tankers—all of which needed to be replaced since they were already very old at 20-30 years.

Also, the study concluded that the industry needed an additional 635 ships between 2007 and 2015.

Credit bureau in place by Q3, says BSP execs

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS SAID A centralized credit bureau would likely be put in place in the third quarter of the year with Congress expected to approve the proposed Credit Information Systems Act (Cisa) soon.

Two versions of the credit reporting bill, a reform deemed necessary to lower interest rates for good borrowers, have been passed in both chambers of Congress and would soon be elevated to the bicameral conference committee for consolidation.

"As soon as it is approved, we will try to put it up in six months," BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. told reporters.

Tetangco said the BSP was willing to accept whatever role Congress would give it in the final framework. The main difference between the two bills is the extent of ownership in the proposed credit bureau that the BSP may take.

"Both versions are workable," BSP Deputy Governor for bank supervision and examination Nestor Espenilla Jr. said in a separate interview.

Under the Senate version authored by Sen. Edgardo Angara and members of the committee on banks, financial institutions and currencies, the BSP's ownership should not exceed 49 percent of the entity, while multilateral international financial institutions would be given an individual ceiling of 15 percent, or such ceiling that the Monetary Board would prescribe.

The Lower House version allows the BSP to own 100 percent of the entity upon its establishment, but mandates the privatization of a majority stake in the centralized credit bureau within three years.

"Once the bill is passed, there will be an incentive for borrowers to maintain good credit record so that their borrowing costs will remain low," Espenilla said.

Based on studies made by BSP consultants, about $3-$4 million was needed to establish a state-of-the-art comprehensive credit reporting bureau. Espenilla said the BSP was willing to invest in the entity and make sure that its operations would be viable.

The bills seek to establish a comprehensive and centralized credit information system for the collection and dissemination of fair and accurate information relevant to, or arising from, credit and credit-related activities of all entities participating in the financial system.

The measures require the submission of credit data by banks, quasi-banks, their subsidiaries and affiliates including insurance and credit card companies. They contain provisions on confidentiality of credit information, which institutions may access credit information and indemnity in favor of credit reporting corporation.

API Group unit clinches 2 gov't coal contracts

PETROLEUM FIRM APC GROUP INC. YESterday announced that one of its units had secured two coal operating contracts with the government.

The contracts cover a total of 5,000 hectares of production field in Masbate and Isabela provinces.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, APC Group corporate secretary Edmundo L. Tan said that Aragorn Coal Resources Inc. and the Department of Energy had signed the contracts signed last Jan. 5.

Tan said one contract, COC No. 145, involves two coal blocks or 2,000 hectares in Masbate. The other contract, COC No. 146, covers three coal blocks or 3,000 hectares in Isabela.

Tan explained that under the terms of the contracts, ACRI would provide the necessary services, technology and financing for the exploration, development and production of coal resources.

ACRI would be entitled to a fee representing 40 percent of the net operating income during commercial production.

Tan added that ACRI has three other pending COC applications covering coal blocks in Cebu, Quezon and Cotabato.

ACRI was formed after APC Group decided to sell its money-losing telecom subsidiary, Philippine Global Communications Inc.

The firm intends to engage in the exploration, exploitation and extraction of all kinds of petroleum, as well as oil, gas and coal.

APC's other concerns include a cement project and manpower outsourcing businesses.

Another APC Group subsidiary, Aragorn Power and Energy Corp., last year signed with the DOE Service Contract No. 48.

SC 48 is related to the exploration and development of gas and oil resources in parts of the Cagayan Valley that cover a total of 748,000 hectares. *Rommel W. Domingo*

P10-B windfall awaits agriculture sector at Asean summit

By Christine A. Gaylican

YAP

THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE is set to seal several deals with Chinese officials that may mean the entry this year of nearly P10 billion worth of investments for the country's agriculture sector, DA Secretary Arthur C. Yap yesterday said.

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabiao and President Macapagal-Arroyo will be signing 20 agreements, mostly for bioethanol projects, as well as contracts to raise rice, corn and cassava crops, at the sidelines of the forthcoming 12th Asean Summit, Yap said.

One memorandum of agreement, involving the China Development Bank, the Fuhua Group of China, the Philippines' SL Agritech Corp. and the DA, will pave the way for the development of 1 million hectares for hybrid corn, hybrid rice and hybrid sorghum.

Another MOA involves the Beidahuang Group of China, which is seeking contract growing arrangements for some 200,000 hectares of rice and corn, and some 40,000 hectares for cassava and sorghum, Yap said in briefing.

Also, there is a trade deal that will enable the Philippines to further tap the $1-billion fruit market in the world's most populated nation, Yap said.

The Beidahuang Group—China's largest agricultural investor with assets amounting to 50 billion yuan—intends to put up a modern agricultural facility and bio-ethanol plant in Northern Luzon, Yap reported.

The Beidahuang Group, the corporate arm of the Heilongjian provincial government in China, is now engaged in organic food production.

"This contract with the Beidahuang Group will involve not only the DA, but also the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Department of Agrarian Reform," Yap said.

An MOA will also be secured for the wholesale marketing of Philippine tropical fruits, including mangoes, bananas, papaya and pineapples, in the province of Guangzhou.

The marketing agreement will also allow duty-free market access in Fujian province.

Yap said that a 1,000-square-meter selling space will be provided for local fruit exporters in the Guangzhou Jiangnian Fruit and Vegetable Market Development Company Ltd. where 80 percent of China's fresh fruits are traded.

Another Chinese firm, the Guangzhou Tianhe Yi Xin Fiber Company, wants to source 100,000 metric tons of coco fiber from local manufacturers.

"The company is looking for a steady supply of coco fiber that it intends to buy for $300 to $400 per metric ton," Yap said, adding that demand for the fiber in China is now skyrocketing.

Separate MOAs will be also signed for the development of four bio-ethnanol projects.

30 to 50 McDo outlets seen to open this year

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

ALLIANCE GLOBAL GROUP INC. (AGGI), the holding company that controls 49 percent of the local McDonald's franchise, will open 30 to 50 stores this year, company chair Andrew Tan said.

Tan declined to reveal the budget for the expansion but said it would come from McDonald's internally generated cash.

AGGI earlier said its shareholders had approved an increase in its capital to P13 billion from P5 billion, which was in line with the aggressive expansion of the company into the food manufacturing business.

Tan said the additional capital of P8 billion would largely be used for acquisitions in the local food manufacturing segment. He said the company could use a combination of debt and equity to fund future deals, which may be announced in the first half of the year.

"We are looking at a rapid way of growing our business this year. The increase in the authorized capital stock will enable us to pursue an aggressive expansion program. Discussions have been started with various parties and the necessary disclosures will follow when everything is finalized," Tan said.

He added that AGGI had substantially increased its capital expenditure this year to P5 billion from P1-P1.5 billion last year, largely for the expansion of its existing glass manufacturing business.

Related to the capital increase, AGGI earlier approved a P3-billion stock rights offering, which involves 2.2 billion common shares valued at P1.50 a share. The 1 for 1 stock rights offer may be issued by the first quarter of next year, sources said.

AGGI said the rights shares would be issued from the 7.95 billion proposed shares increase in its authorized capital.

A tax of the clones

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

ONE OF THE ONLY TWO CONSTANTS in this world (i.e., death and taxes) must have afflicted many of us last year.

I say that because, based on figures that a top official of the Department of Finance recently leaked to media, I'm afraid the BIR really did a fantastic job last year.

And we all know what it means: When the BIR does its job well, this tax-hungry but still cute administration of Gloriaetta gets more of our money.

Last year, based on the leak ... este, media reports, the BIR got something like P610 billion of our money.

That was a 23-percent jump, or about P110 billion in absolute amount, from its collection the previous year in 2005, which reached only P500 billion.

The P110-billion additional tax collection had to come from somewhere. You cannot just clone tax collection even in these hi-tech days. Tell you what: Some people in business, whether big or small, had to cough up that amount.

Still, I hear that the morale of BIR personnel seems to be low.

That's because they are not going to get the "incentive" under the law for a job well done, which is 15 percent of the collection in excess of the target.

Again—that's the TARGET! This is set by the DOF, using crystal balls such as forecasts on growth and inflation, which are always hardly accurate.

That's why, sensing the effect on BIR personnel, BIR Commissioner Jose Augusto Buñag, a long-time tax lawyer before he joined the government, begged the DOF to change the target it set for BIR.

His appeal unfortunately fell on deaf ears in media, Congress and this cute administration.

Question: What will happen now to the revenue campaign of this cute administration? There will be an effect somehow, somewhere.

You see, the BIR collection of P610 billion in 2006 was already near the bureau's record increase that was posted in 1997—which was nevertheless still a boom year.

And so the media is grilling the BIR, supposedly for missing the target. The BIR employees thus would not get the incentives.

The problem, as I said, lies in the way the target is set for the BIR. The DOF expected the BIR to collect P675 billion for 2006. It nevertheless included some P49 billion in taxes (withholding and doc stamp) from the issuance of T-bills.

But instead of getting the P49-billion T-bill taxes, which was the DOF-set target, the BIR actually reported a much lower P36-billion collection of the T-bill taxes.

Why was that? Well, simply, the government did not issue as much T-bills last year as the DOF had assumed when it had set the BIR collection target.

Guess what? The Bureau of Treasury did not need to borrow as much by issuing T-bills because of the BIR's own doing—working on good tax collection.

Let me see if I get this right: You mean to tell me, boss, because the BIR personnel did a good job in tax collection—which actually allowed the government to cancel the T-bill issuances, which in turn resulted in the BIR's missing the tax collection target from T-bill issuances, which were really outside the control of the BIR itself—the BIR personnel are now being punished?

Only in this country ...

In fact, Rep. Jose Salceda, the ex-economist who is now an avid supporter of this cute administration, already noted the bizarre situation in various Ledac meetings.

And as usual, nothing happened. Why was that? Well, this cute administration decided that it would not change the BIR target.

No matter how inaccurate it might have been, even if it would hurt business?

Well, let's put it this way: This cute administration just told the BIR that its personnel should just collect taxes elsewhere (i.e., business) to cover for the collection shortfall from the T-bills. Thank you, boss!

But to the BIR personnel, another sore item in the stupid target was the VAT on the oil refining business.

The target assumed that the BIR would collect some P27 billion in VAT on locally refined oil. It was a wrong assumption, of course.

Since we are becoming a nation of traders—since our government does not mind us importing even toilet paper—we bought mostly refined oil last year from abroad.

So, the BIR could not collect the P27-billion VAT on refined oil assumed in the target. Who did? Well, the Bureau of Customs did.

And to think that the P27 billion was not even considered in setting the BOC target. It was a bonus collection for the BOC.

The BOC in effect added the VAT on imported refined oil to its collection, allowing the BOC to, er, ahh, "exceed" its target.

So much so that Sen. Ralph Recto asked the BOC personnel in a Senate hearing if, without the VAT on refined oil, the BOC would have missed its target.

Under oath, the BOC personnel affirmed Recto's observation.

And here is the catch, since the BOC supposedly exceeded its target on paper, its personnel will get the "incentives."

Let me see if I get also this one: You mean boss, since the BOC was credited with the oil refining VAT collection, which was put in the target for the BIR, actually causing the BIR to miss its target and the BOC to exceed its own, the BOC personnel will get the bonanza, and the BIR personnel will just have to harass more business people, is that it?

What was the "incentive law" for BIR and BOC all about if not to prevent the BIR and the BOC personnel from stealing?

And, ladies and gentlemen, let me tell you a little secret: Our BIR is probably the only tax collection agency in the whole world that has a yearly collection target.

It has become an obsession—in Congress, in media, in the DOF.

The setting of collection targets for BOC and BIR, which started when I was still covering the DOF as a beat reporter, was originally meant as internal goals of the bureau.

They somehow evolved into a gauge of BIR and BOC performance. This, mind you, is good, I think, provided that the targets are reasonable, and well crafted.

But our contacts in business noted that the targets seem to be rearing their ugly heads. You see, under the "attrition" law, BIR district personnel for instance can be relieved of their posts if they fail to meet their individual targets.

So how did the BIR try to cover for that P27-billion VAT tax from the oil refining business that the BIR could not possibly collect, simply because the BOC was lucky enough to have collected it?

Perhaps the BIR personnel went out to gang-audit some business establishments, who knows? They have to raise their collection by hook or by crook, right? They have to meet the targets, right? Or else, they lose their jobs!

What a country!

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LIFESTYLE

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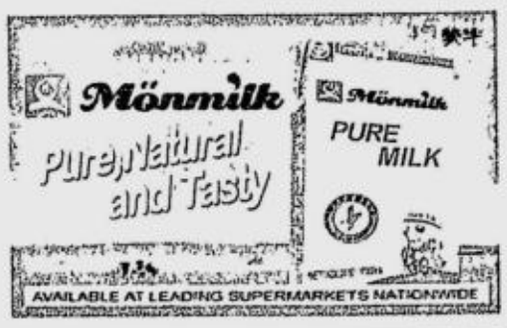

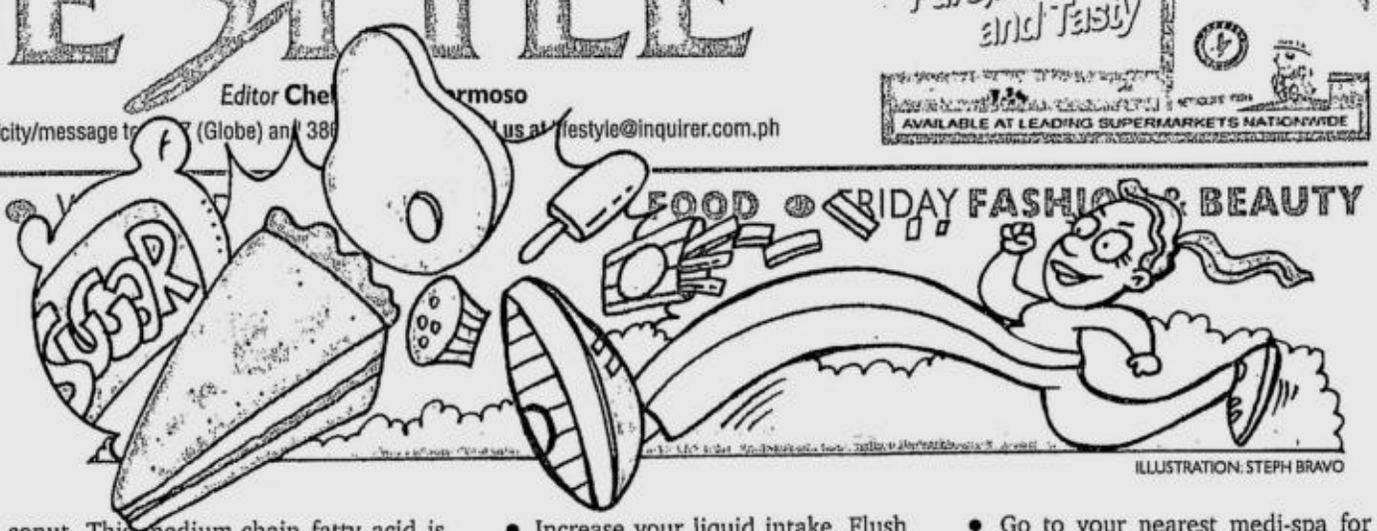

ILLUSTRATION: STEPH BRAVO

INSIDE OUT
Cory Quirino

Time to detoxify

WHILE LONG HOLIdays are generally enjoyable the celebration that often accompanies can lead to excess, whether you like it or not. In short, the celebration comes with a price, not a prize.

One look

All it takes is just one look. Facing the mirror is always a reality check. Examine closely what damage too much alcohol, overeating and late nights can cause.

It takes its toll on your health. The obvious is clearly seen—extra weight, added inches, bloating, sallow complexion, general weakness, puffy eyes. Need we go on?

But don't be dismayed. There's always hope.

How to unload

It is not as difficult as it may seem. However, your determination to detoxify should be firm.

• Declare a temporary ban on the following: Sugar in whatever form; refined carbo (baked products, pastries, cakes); chocolates/candies sweetened with sugar or honey; sugar substitutes like sugar-free items are acceptable.

• Stop chewing on fat, this means, saturated fat like animal products steaks/pork (unless lean), cheese, whole milk, ice cream, lard, marbled meats, creamy food. The only acceptable saturated fat is the one that comes from coconut. This medium-chain fatty acid is actually converted into energy by your body and never stored as fat.

So, it is perfectly safe to use coconut oil for cooking, drink virgin coco oil, eat fresh coconuts/coco cream, etc. If you have to take milk, make it low- or non-fat.

• Forego fried foods for now. Try sautéing or baking, steaming or broiling. Remove the skin from chicken before cooking.

• Increase your portions of vegetables and fruits. Adding more greens ought to lighten the load on your tummy.

• Snack on healthy items—fruits, nuts, vegetables, whole-grain food.

• Fiber up with a supplement. This should sweep your digestive tract well enough.

• Get back on track with exercise. Anything that keeps you moving is good.

• Increase your liquid intake. Flush out toxins by drinking a full glass of lukewarm water every hour on the hour.

• Hang the hangover. Say no to any alcoholic beverage for at least a month. Most alcoholic drinks—brandy, bourbon, red wine—contain coloring/flavoring, substances that can cause headaches.

There is no truth to the saying "the only way to cure a hangover is to drink alcohol the morning after." No excuses. Take two antacids, double your water intake, eat non-spicy oily food, increase Vitamin C supplements, two aspirins and sleep/rest.

• Breath in some fresh air. Avoid smoky establishments. Stay away from smokers even if they are your closest friends.

Think of healthy ways to entertain yourself. Think nature. Visit the great outdoors more often.

• Go to your nearest medi-spa for emergency work on your dry, sallow complexion. Even a simple facial will do.

Home facial

Steam your face for three minutes with hot water and a few leaves of mint and basil. Scrub gently with a little sugar mixed with virgin coco oil.

Wash with a mild soap. Pat dry. Again, apply a light film of virgin coco oil on your face for deep moisturizing. If you are unsure of the brand to buy, consider Cocozen (virgin coco oil beauty products at Watsons, Rose Pharmacy). And use Oil And Herbs Pineapple Soaps (SM, Watsons, Pure Gold, Robinsons).

Affirm: "A new me is just a wish away."

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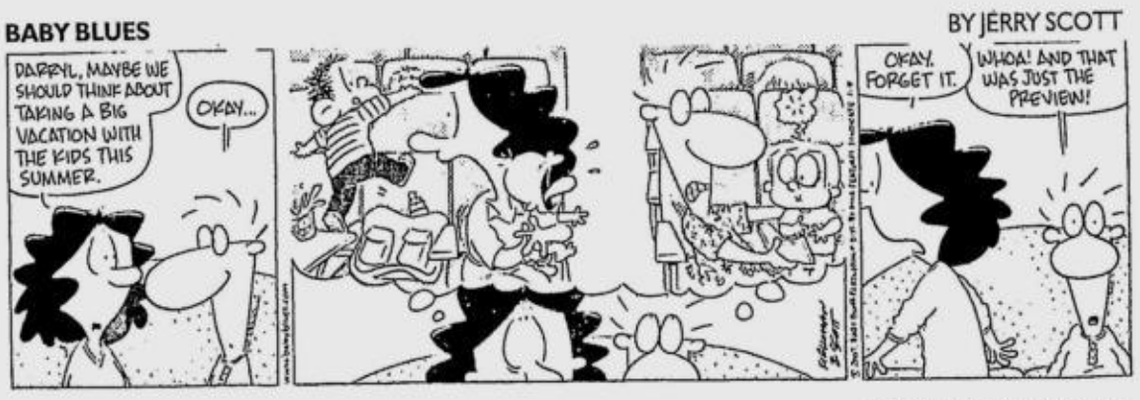

PUGAD BABOY
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BY LYRA GARCELLANO

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BY STEVEN PABALINAS

BUMISITA SI CHARLES MANSON SA PILIPINAS NANG NALAMAN NYA NA MAY "SPECIAL FAVOR" ANG MGA AMERIKANONG KRIMINAL DITO

KIKO MACHINE
BY MANIX ABRERA

MIKROKOSMOS
BY JOMIKE TEJIDO

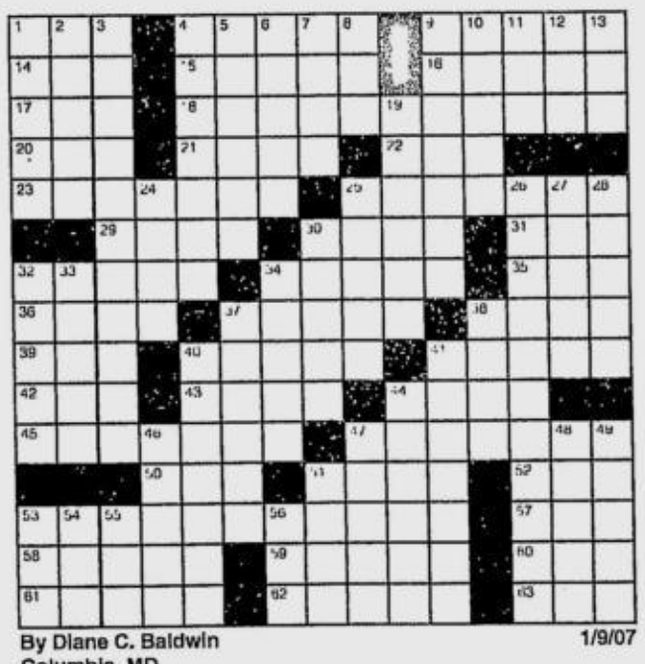
TULDOK
BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING

BEN
BY DANIEL SHELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Grad. degrees
4 Future oak
9 Boneheaded
14 Frequently, to a bard
15 Son of Montague
16 Southeast Asian capital
17 Spanish river
18 Meeting moderator
20 Old hand
21 Chilean cape
22 "Roses __ red..."
23 Assistants
25 Quiver
29 Impudent
30 Common crustacean
31 Make "all gone"
32 Dilutes
34 Garish
35 Utmost degree
36 Sty denizens
37 Blink of an eye
38 Belly problem
39 Future school?
40 Idiosyncrasy
41 Different
42 Cry of discovery
43 "Do __ others as..."
44 Increase
45 Tosses back and forth
47 Plains tribe
50 Collector's French coin
51 Petty quarrel
52 Unrefined
53 Boob tube addict
57 Wire thickness measure
58 Off-the-wall
59 Brave soul
60 __ out (supplement)
61 __ on (victimizes)
62 Access
63 Tiresome grind

DOWN
1 Change shape
2 Blazing
3 Informer
4 Bowmen
5 Accomplice
6 Sharif and Bradley
7 Deer head?
8 Negative link
9 "...and __ hangs a tale"
10 Seraglio
11 Election winners
12 Speak tenderly
13 Relatives
19 Fourth of July event
24 Animal quarters
25 Pickup
26 Third-string player
27 Shaping machine
28 Anesthetic option
30 Egyptian hub
32 Pulsate
33 Bit of an uproar
34 Dixie breakfast fare
37 Rehearsal
38 On the crest
40 Pastry entrees
41 Declamation
44 Kitchen utensil
46 Condemn
47 Independently
48 Japanese verse
49 Little screecher
51 Musial or Kenton
53 Flatfoot
54 Sharing pronoun
55 Shoshone
56 Praiseful composition



By Diane C. Baldwin
Columbia, MD
1/9/07

Monday's Puzzle Solved

C	D	L		L	A	V	A	B	O		O	B	E	Y
L	E	A		O	L	I	V	E	R		M	I	L	E
O	J	S		L	A	D	I	D	A		A	R	I	L
N	A	V		A	M	E	S		N	O	R	M	A	L
E	V	E	N		O	O	O		G	E	R	I		
D	U	G	O	N	G	S		P	E	R		N	P	R
		A	T	O	M		D	O	C		O	G	E	E
B	C	S	C	H	A	M	P	I	O	N	S	H	I	P
I	E	O	H		C	A	W		T	A	T	A		
T	A	U		A	F	L		A	T	T	E	M	P	T
		T	E	R	I		F	R	O		O	S	L	O
R	E	B	U	K	E		R	O	N	S		U	A	R
C	R	A	B		S	P	O	U	S	E		G	I	T
M	D	C	I		T	I	S	S	U	E		A	C	E
P	E	K	E		A	T	T	E	N	D		R	E	S

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1/9/07

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: You have a strong sense of destiny. You intend to be somebody and to do something with your life. Needless to say, you're ambitious. You're also highly resourceful. You know how to turn situations to your advantage. You bounce back from adversity because you never forget your purpose. The year ahead is full of bright, exciting possibilities and new beginnings.
Birthdate of: Joan Baez, singer/activist; Dave Matthews, musician; Crystal Gayle, singer

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): It might be a challenge to work with a particular coworker today. You feel judgmental, disappointed or hot under the collar about something. Wait until you're no longer angry before you speak.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Don't jump to conclusions when dealing with children today. Similarly, a romantic partner might disappoint you. Wait until you calm down. Anger serves no purpose except to make everyone miserable.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Discussions with partners or family members might be intense and emotional today. This is not a good atmosphere to talk about anything important. Cool your jets.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): It's easy to be compulsive or obsessed about something today. This is not a very sane frame of mind, but it grips all of us at times. Be patient with yourself and others.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Be careful with financial matters today, because you could compulsively do something you later regret. Why not wait a day or two to give matters a sober second thought?

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Encounters with others could force some kind of emotional confrontation. It won't be for the best. Withdraw so that you can live to fight another day.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): It's easy to feel jealous, disappointed or angry with somebody today. Ironically, this only makes you miserable as well. Just deal honestly with your feelings.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Power struggles, especially with a female, are possible today. If you've been suppressing your feelings, you want to explode. But will you regret this later?

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Confrontations with VIPs, parents, teachers and bosses can arise very easily today. Steer clear of these! They won't solve anything. Wait until you feel different.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Avoid religious and political arguments, which could become heated. Don't let someone try to convince you of anything, and vice versa.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): This is a poor day to decide how to share something. You will too easily feel possessive or even jealous of someone or something.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Relationships are difficult today. People (including you) feel too heated and emotional about everything. Avoid arguments. Let sleeping dogs lie. Think about your long-term objectives for what you really want. Don't blow something because of the heat of the moment.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

	5	7			2			
			7	5				3
		4				9		7
1							8	
	6		3		5		2	
	7							4
6		8				3		
5				4	3			
			9			1	4	

Difficulty Level ★★
1/09

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

8	6	2	7	5	3	4	9	1
3	4	7	6	9	1	2	8	5
5	1	9	8	2	4	6	3	7
7	3	4	9	1	6	5	2	8
9	8	5	3	4	2	1	7	6
1	2	6	5	8	7	3	4	9
4	5	1	2	7	9	8	6	3
2	9	3	1	6	8	7	5	4
6	7	8	4	3	5	9	1	2

Difficulty Level ★

PAL'S Henry So Uy, 2006 Lowest Gross Champion Larry Roy Tojino, and PAL's beauty and brains Babsie Aragon

PAL'S Kit Javier with Aragon, Adreflex's Clang Garcia and Ria Domingo

PANASONIC Avionics Corp. VP Gerard Yap, PAL's VP for Logistics and Purchasing Andy Li, and Petron's Loel Lamela

FLIGHT BUDDIES: Enrique de las Peñas, Alberto Dy Sun and Benjamin Cheng

MABUHAY Miles Premier Elite member Masahito Hamaguchi and Mabuhay Miles Million-miler Vicente Solon

A tournament exclusively for the 'Elite'

LADIES WHO SWING: Regina Francisco, Helen Yap and Mereane Siason

MABUHAY MILES ELITE member **Larry Tojino** made the most of the tough conditions at the Eagle Ridge Golf & Country Club in General Trias, Cavite, to outclass an awesome field of 355 players and win the 2006 Mabuhay Miles Elite Invitational Golf Tournament, dahlings.

Larry T. is a medical doctor and chief executive officer of Veincare Clinic in Pasig City.

Valeriano Floro, scion of the *tres* famous sporting clan and winner of this same event in 2001-2003, took overall net honors this time.

The two hard-swinging gentlemen won over tons of hotshot CEOs, professionals and other captains of industry... all Elite and Premier Elite members of Philippine Airlines' Mabuhay Miles program, *palanggas*.

The event was cosponsored by Adidas Philippines, Airbus, Boeing, GE Aviation, HSBC, Mizuno and Petron Corp.

It was a difficult day for the golfers who struggled with the demanding world-class courses designed by hot name-droppables such as **Andy Dye, Nick Faldo** and **Greg Norman**.

Ferdinand Agustin, president of Lyncor Inc., and **Bryan Cockrell**, president of Pathfinder Group, were first and second runners-up, respectively, in Class A, *palanggas*. Class B had a three-way tie at the top: **Masahito Hamaguchi, Wilfred Pacpaco** and **Marvin Caparros**.

In Class C, dahlings, Cebu's **Armando Serafin**, president of Insuphil Industrial Corp., won over architect **Daniel Go** and realtor **Severino Oliva**.

Class D was topped by brilliant **Richard Santos**, vice president of Cinderella Marketing. He was followed by **Alfonso Santiago** and Los Angeles-based **Fernando Sison**, *palanggas*.

Our queen for a day, **Elvira Liboro**, treasurer of AE&E's Development Corp., ruled the ladies' division. **Venjo Reyes Jr.** took the guests' division.

Century Park Hotel was the tournament's official hotel; Philam Insurance, official insurer; and Toyota Motor Philippines, hole-in-one sponsor.

Naturellement, with a tournament like this, there were tons of prizes from Airbus, Asia Brewery, Boracay Regency Beach Resort, Cinderella Marketing Corp., Shangri-La Hotels and Resort, Guam Visitors Bureau, Marco Polo Hotels, Pan Pacific Manila, Premier Wine & Spirits, Samsonite, and Cross, among others, *palanggas*.

PAL director Lucio Tan Jr.

AIRBUS Area Sales director Len Battrum

VIVA Hot Babes Andrea del Rosario and Maui Taylor with 2006 Overall Net Champion Bones Floro

TESSA Prieto-Valdes, with hairstylist Victor Ortega of Emphasis Salon, in front of her Hair Museum portrait

AUDRA Lucero, Davines sales and marketing director; Madam Cosetta Fedele, wife of Italian Ambassador to the Philippines Rubens Anna Fedele; Armand Valencia, Davines finance director; and Tajana Bartoli of the Italian Embassy

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by **Alex Van Hagen** using **Kodak** EasyShare system

Opening

A different kind of art exhibit opened at the Ayala Museum. Manille's women of style and beauty gathered for the launch of the 2006 Davines Hair Museum that displayed portraits by renowned fashion photographer **Raymund Isaac**, no less, *palanggas*.

Showcased were elaborate hair creations by top stylists including **Victor Ortega** (Emphasis Salon), **Danny Katalbas** (Emphasis), **Eric Maningat** (Studio 456), **Kenti Tam** (Salon de Ken), **Pin Antonio** (Salon de Manila), **Stefan Wilczynski** (Basement Shangri-La), **Angelo Justin** (Basement Rockwell) and **Fanny Serrano**.

The fashionable crowd included such well-known personalities as **Korina Sanchez, Joyce Jimenez, Angel Locsin, Paolo Soler, Vicky Morales, Dawn Zulueta, Cheska Garcia, Antoinette Taus, Claudine Trillo** and **Ira Cruz**.

Hors d'oeuvres and martinis were served before the "hair-cutting," in place of the ribbon-snipping, formally opened the museum. It was led by Signora **Cosetta Fedele**, wife of the Italian ambassador to the Philippines.

CHAMPION TEAM: Manila Bulletin's Jun Nicholas, Kodak's Hedda Kison, *moi*, Phoemela Barranda, Kodak's Angela Francisco and handsome general manager Mon Albert, and Tim Yap

THE KODAK V-series cameras allowed us to capture storyboard-type photos. I starred in my own storyboard called "Finding Home in Kodak."

ZOOM shot using the Kodak V610

Joey Mead's red and geometric 'do, depicting a pharaoh's headpiece created by **Angelo J.**, was a sight to behold.

The portraits of **Cat Juan** featured a "Harlequin Doll" 'do by **Eric M.** Danny K. gave us a feminine curled coif modeled by **Phoemela Barranda**. Stefan W. put lines and shapes in his creation, with extra long waves and an unusual "hair cone," for **Michelle Barzotto**.

Adorable **Tessa Prieto-Valdes'** peacock-inspired and black-and-white hairstyles by Victor O. were an extension of her trademark wildly creative style.

The event also launched the first local hair competition of Davines Philippines. The winner will represent the Philippines in the international 2007 World Style Contest in Barcelona, Spain, organized by Davines Italy. Finalists' works will be included in a 2008 calendar, dahlings.

Davines products are available at leading salons nationwide. For more information about Davines World Style Contest, call CRAI Inc. at 6870424 or 6871156.

Media challenge

In a unique reversal of roles, the world-renowned Kodak put me behind the viewfinder during the super fun Kodak Celebrity Shoot Out and Media Challenge at the forever hot M Café in Greenbelt Makati.

I teamed up with gorgeous Phoemela B., **Jun Nicholas** and Studio 23 host **Juddha Paolo**. **Tim Yap** showed up when everything was over, explaining to me, "I had a thousand things to do but rushed over here right away. Sorry."

We were told "to be creative" with Kodak's latest offering, the Kodak EasyShare V705, the smallest ultra-wide angle optical zoom digital camera; the Kodak v610, the smallest 10x optical zoom camera; and the Kodak EasyShare V603, a small, stylish camera packed with innovative features to enhance the photography experience.

Our first task was to come up with a photo bursting with color. Without batting an eyelash, *moi* had Miss Colorful Personality herself, Phoemela B., natch, pose against a Kodak backdrop. The result was... check it out! Kodak's unique Perfect Touch technology makes colors come alive!

Using the Kodak V705, Phoemela B. shot me literally bursting out of the colorful Kodak backdrop, *palanggas*.

The awesome Kodak V series cameras allowed us to capture storyboard-type photos. I starred in my own storyboard titled "Finding Home in Kodak."

The Kodak V610 boasts of 10x optical zoom capability. With another camera, you could not tell who I was chatting with when photographed from a distance. But when we used the 10x zoom of the V610, you could clearly see who was with *moi*!

With our creativity, we won the Kodak Celebrity Shoot Out and Media Challenge, beating three other teams. Our reward? You guessed it, *palanggas*. The latest Kodak EasyShare V705 for each talented member of my team!

ALL IN THE *FAMILLE*: Anna Mitra Isaac, Edward Isaac and Beth Isaac

STUNNING IN BLACK: Dawn Zulueta and TV's Korina Sanchez

CLAUDINE Trillo, Pia Guanio and Chester Co, Davines operations director

DAVINES ladies Jacquelyn Tan and Isabel Dumandan

BENCH'S Miguel Pastor, Ben Chan and Jojo Llamzon

Messages

MINOR BASILICA OF THE BLACK NAZARENE
Parish of St. John the Baptist
Quiapo Manila
Telephone 733-0945

Since this "Fullness of Life" (Kaganapan ng Buhay) means the development of the Human Person with Dignity and Value for his Person as highest priority, in pursuit of 'common good' which aims at genuine progress through integral development, that is, the promotion of every man and the whole man (Paul VI), the Basilica of the Black Nazarene, Quiapo, Manila has come up with Programs in keeping with the theme: "Kaganapan ng Buhay" so aligned with the Vision of the Archdiocese of Manila, and thus concretized as such towards the full realization of the same.

With the said Programs and series of Activities, all Devotees and Pilgrims of the Black Nazarene, coming from all parts of the country, with a rich culture and tradition, are enjoined to unite, even in diversity, as one people with one language of love towards nation-building and progress: "Sambayanang Nagkakaisa Tungo sa Kaganapan ng Buhay sa Pagsunod sa Yapak ng Nuestro Padre Jesus Nazareno!"

Msgr. JOSEFINO S. RAMIREZ
Rector/Parish Priest
Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene

The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Manila

"We, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Manila, the clergy and the faithful devotees of Jesus Nazareno, after diligent prayer, and after discerning the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, guided by the established doctrine on popular devotions, do hereby proclaim to all the Roman Catholic faithful of the Archdiocese of Manila:

1. the celebration of the Fourth Centenary of Nuestro Padre Jesus Nazareno de Quiapo;

2. that the centenary celebration shall carry the theme: Jesus Nazareno Kaganapan ng Buhay (Jn10-10), which appropriately embodies His salvific role as center of our lives as contained in the Vision statement of the Archdiocese of Manila: Bayang tinawag ng Ama kay Jesucristo upang maging sambayanan ng mga taong may Kaganapan ng Buhay; sumasaksi sa paghahari ng Diyos na nagsasabuhay ng Misteryo paskal sa kapangyarihan ng Espiritu Santo kasama ng Mahal ng Ina, Birheng Maria"

GAUDENCIO B. CARDINAL ROSALES, D.D.
Archbishop
Archdiocese of Manila

Your commemoration of the 'Traslacion' (transfer of the original image of the Black Nazarene from Intramuros to Quiapo) is also an opportune time to thank Him for His Divine Providence and Mercy showered upon these past years. I exhort you to continue to be a blessing to those who are in need as You allow him to use you mightily for whatever divine purpose He has for each of us.

May you all remain as God's powerful instrument in uplifting the spiritual needs of our people through the pious devotion to the Black Nazarene. During these times of adversities, it is only through our strong faith in God that we could achieve strength amidst insurmountable difficulties, spiritual and otherwise."

Hon. MAYOR JOSE L. ATIENZA, JR.
Mayor
City of Manila

JESUS NAZARENO de QUIAPO

Kaganapan ng Buhay
ika - 400 taong
Pagdiriwang 1606 - 2006

Nuestro Padre Jesus Nazareno

Anyone who gazes intently upon this image of Christ will be irresistibly moved with pity. And if he contemplates further, Christ will seem to tell him, "See how I suffer carrying this heavy cross after having been flogged. It is not of my own making that I undergo these sufferings. It is for you, so you could be reconciled with our Father. This cross is made heavy by your sins. Will you ease my burden by atoning for your sins?"

Perhaps Christ will also tell him, "If you wish to become a true Christian, take up your cross and follow me." But in the same breath, He assures him "Tell me your troubles, your needs, and problems, and I am here to help you".

The image of the Nuestro Padre Jesus Nazareno has inspired countless number of people to nurture a devotion to this image of Christ. Faith in Him, reinforced by answered prayers, have intensified and preserved such devotion.

There is no definite account as to the origin of the statue. It was reportedly the work of an unidentified Mexican artist who chose to render the image in dark brownish-mulatto color, similar to his own skin tone. Eventually, it was referred to as the Black Nazarene because when it arrived in the Philippines the color turned darker. But this endeared it all the more to the Filipinos who seemed to have shown affinity to images they could relate with, such as those of the Virgin of Antipolo and the Our Lady of Peñafrancia, among others.

The statue, entrusted to an unknown Recollect priest, was brought across the Pacific Ocean aboard a galleon that arrived in Manila at an undetermined date. As the first group of Recollect Friars (the priests now in charge of San Sebastian Church and San Sebastian College in Manila) came in the year 1606, it has been assumed that the statue also arrived either on that year or a few years later.

Based on writings of the famous historian Father Juan dela Concepcion, OSRA, the statue of the Nazarene remained for sometime in the hands of the Recollect Fathers. "In the Recollect Church, the image of the Nazareno spawned a following. It was a devotion that got extensively propagated among the people of Manila. The Confraternity of our Lord Jesus of Nazareth was founded on April 20, 1621. It was doubtlessly the most prosperous confraternity in the olden days" (Historia de Filipinas, 1788).

Fr. Jose Garcia de S. Lorenzo Martir, ORSA, in an unpublished report "El Convento de Recoletos de S. Nicholas de Tolentino de Manila," said this confraternity was officially authorized by a Bull of Pope Innocent X, expedited in Rome on April 20, 1650. He also reported that the Nazareno was enshrined in the special chapel adjacent to the church of the Recoletos in Intramuros.

In the absence of any written reference to the exact year of transfer of the Image of Quiapo, the pamphlet "Brief History of the Church of Quiapo and Its Miraculous Image Jesus Nazarene (Manila, 1937) written by Rev. Dr. Vicente Catapang, provided some clue. Taking as source the Cronicas de la Provincia de San Antonio, he wrote that before the second burning of the church in 1791 the image had already been transferred to Quiapo.

Father Catapang further wrote, that "the image was given to the church of Quiapo according to the wish of the Archibishop of Manila, as said church was already under the charge of the native clergy."

Meanwhile, Rev. Fr. Leonardo G. Agcaoile, Vice Chairman, Historical Research Committee, Archdiocese of Manila, stated in the 1964 Souvenir Program of the Quiapo Fiesta "The Nuestro Padre Jesus Nazareno was blessed by Archbishop Basilio Sancho in the 18th Century and by Pope Pius VII in the 19th century. The Nazarene has since then towered above the altar of the Quiapo church."

Thus, it may be inferred that Archbishop Sancho was the one referred to by Father Catapang in connection with the transfer of the Nazarene. Arch. Sancho served from 1767 to 1787. (*Rev Francisco S. Giaman*)

Historical Milestones

1588 — Quiapo church was erected with Franciscan friar Antonio de Nombella as first parish priest. Patron saint was St. John the Baptist. It housed the Archbishop of Manila's chancery office.

1603 — The church was burned due to the rebellion of the Chinese.

1635 — Governor General Sebastian Hurtado de Corcuera transferred the administration of the church to the Jesuits, only to be returned to Diocesan Priests four years later.

1645 — The church was hit by a strong earthquake.

1767 — The image of the Black Nazarene was brought by the Recollect Fathers during the incumbency of Archbishop Basilio Sancho. They had a confraternity of Jesus Nazareno in Intramuros

1791 — The church was gutted by another fire.

1863 — Church was laid flat by a very strong earthquake that also demolished the Manila Cathedral.

1864 — A stronger church was built. Construction was initiated by Father Eusebio de Leon and completed by Father Manuel Roxas in 1898.

1929 — Church was destroyed by fire. Father Magdaleno Castillo began reconstruction four years later, with Juan Nakpil as architect.

1975 — Msgr. Jose Abriol, P. A. was installed parish priest. He succeeded Bishop Hernando Antiporda and assistant parish priest Father Raymundo Costales who were brutally murdered a few months before.

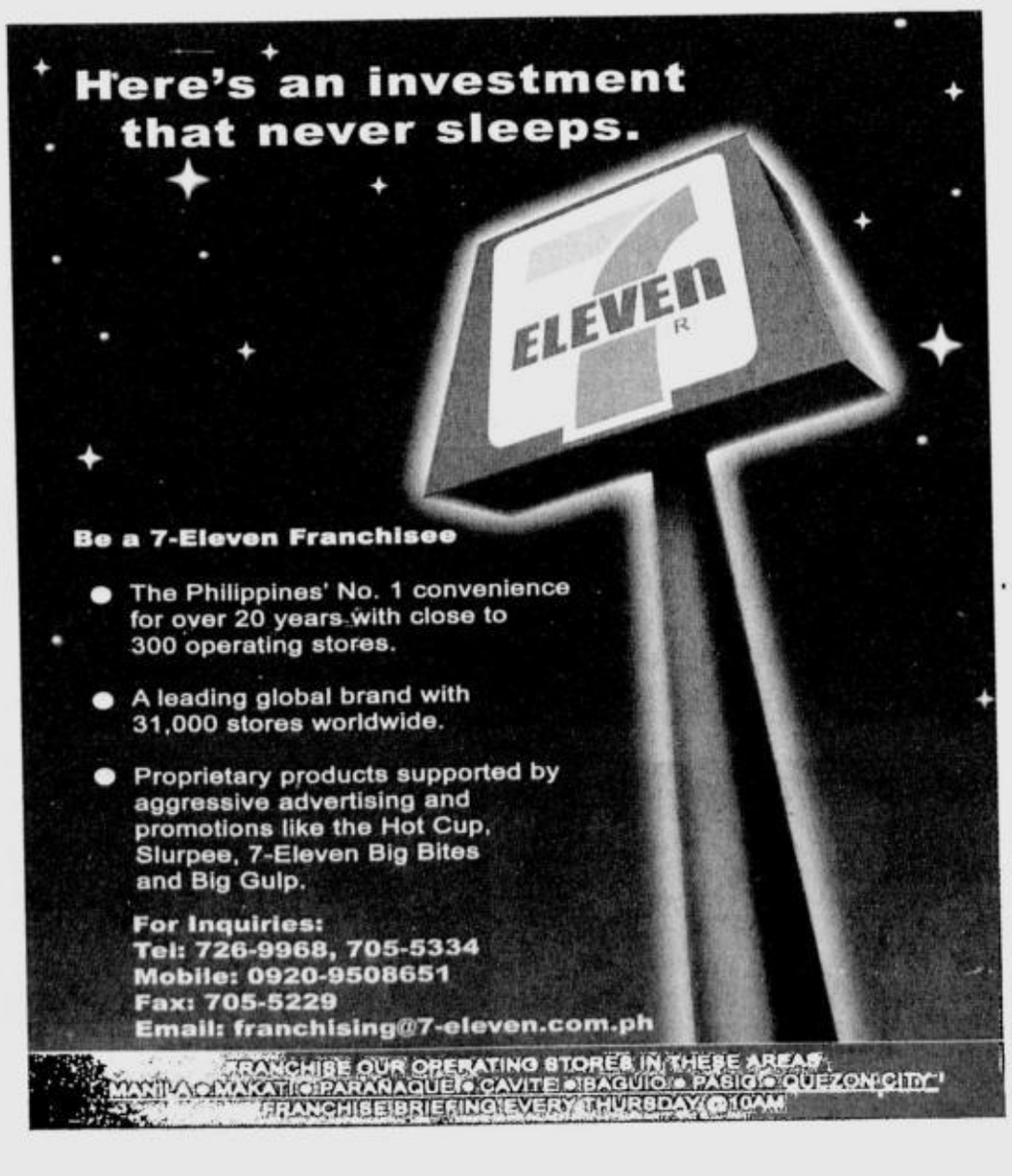
1981 — Four concrete buildings housing Quiapo Parochial School were built along R. Hidalgo Street. The school has since been managed by the Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres.

1984 — Church was remodeled by Archbishop Jose Ma. Zaragoza and Engr. Eduardo Santiago. Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin blessed the edifice on September 28, 1987

1988 — Church was made a basilica through the initiative of Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin and Papal Nuncio, Most Rev. Bruno Torpigliani. The Nuncio blessed the altar of San Lorenzo Ruiz on February 1, 1988.

1989 — Thru the generosity of the people of Quiapo and devotees of the Nazareno, five bronze bells and three electronic clocks were acquired from Holland.

1999 — Bishop Teodoro J. Buhain, was installed parish priest. He implemented not only major changes in the management of the Basilica, but more importantly, he instituted regular spiritual formation of church workers.



Program Schedule
January 8 to 9

4:00 pm	Motorcade to bring image to the Luneta
7:00 pm	10 min fireworks display / Arrival of the Black Nazarene
8:00 pm	Opening Talk-Archbishop Lagdameo/Candle Light ceremony
9:00 pm	Penitential Rites (100 priests for confessions)
10 - 12 mn	Dr. Love Radio Show (live over DZMM)
10:30 - 11:30 pm	Guests: Fatima Soriano & Christopher de Leon
12 mn - 3:00 am	K-5 Evangelization, Musical Concert with live band
3:00 - 3:20 am	Giselle Sanchez
3:20 - 4:00 am	Talk: Chito Jongco, "Pagbabalik Loob"
4:00 - 4:30 am	Oasis of Love Music Ministry - Christmas Carols
4:30 - 5:15 am	Talk - Rene Tumang, "Pagbabagong Buhay"
5:15 - 5:45 am	Tia Pusit, Gary Lim
5:45 - 6:00 am	Oasis of Love Ministry - Praise Songs, in preparation for Holy Mass
6:00 - 8:00 am	Holy Mass
8:00 - 9:00 am	Agape breakfast (share your baon)
9:00 - 12 noon	Paseo de Banda "Pass n Review"
12 noon onwards	Grand Procession - Back to Quiapo, then around vicinity of Quiapo (original route) back to Quiapo Church at 8:00 pm

Devotion to the Nazareno

Living... Believing...

THE PANDEMONIUM THAT ENSUES ONCE the Black Nazarene is brought out of Quiapo Church either on Jan. 9 or on Good Friday is often driven by the devotees' uncompromising desire to touch the image in the hope of experiencing a "miracle". But regardless of their motivation, to many of them, the Nuestro Padre Jesus Nazareno is their Provider, Confidante, and Friend for whom they would not mind experiencing some physical discomfort.

The *mamamasan* – or the men who volunteer to pull the rope or steer the *carroza* – have made it their commitment to join the procession barefoot, unmindful of the grimy street made scorchingly hot by the sun, nor of the distance the five-hour-long procession usually takes.

And upon their return to the Basilica after the procession, other *mamamasan* would form what they call the "Spartan" - a human barricade that would direct those who joined the procession to the Church's side entrances. Without such barricade, the sea of devotees who joined the procession would enter the church kneeling towards the altar, to complete their respective sacrifices.

On the days the processions are held, devotees would line up as early as 4 a.m. for the *pahalik*. Many families – with both the elderly members and the young toddlers in tow – bear long hours in the queue just so they could kiss the foot of the Nazareno behind the church's main altar. The *pahalik* lasts the whole day on Jan. 9 and ends at 2 p.m. on Good Friday.

While Friday is designated as "Quiapo Day" (as this is when the Novena to the Black Nazarene is usually said), many have made it a habit to visit the Señor every single day.

The small chapel near the sacristy containing all four images of the Black Nazarene – genuflecting, crucified, laid in the sepulcher, and risen – never run out of devotees who take time out to pray.

Most of them pray hard for their wishes to be granted – a good job, a life-long partner, a more comfortable life. Some continue their devotion even after their prayers have been answered, as an expression of gratitude. Others couple their prayers with some sacrifice to atone for their sins.

It is easy to dismiss the Filipinos' devotion to the Black Nazarene as bordering on fanaticism. But notwithstanding their sometimes "excessive" display of faith (if ever there is such a thing), the relationship thousands of these devotees keep with the Señor is something very real.

And this is what prompts them to seriously keep their *panata*, or life-long commitment of service. (*Ed and Ai Timbungco*)

Answered prayers

THE DOCTOR'S FACE TOOK ON A GRAVE expression. He put his arm around the shoulder of Joseph Arcache Sr, patted it gently and proclaimed "I'm sorry Joe, but your boy is dead."

The grief-stricken father sank to the floor sobbing, "But why, but why….?" was all he could utter. "Spinal meningitis is a fatal disease," the doctor countered slowly. "As a doctor I did all I could. Nothing could have saved him but a miracle".

Joseph rose from the floor slowly, painfully. His eyes fell on the still form of his five-year-old son lying there. In moments like these, Dr. Navarro found words hard to come by. All he could do was stare. Suddenly, his eyes widened as the grief stricken father gathered up the motionless form of his young son, and tenderly cradling him in his arms, walked slowly out of the room.

"Come back, come back," Dr. Navarro ordered. "You can do nothing now. No one can do anything."

But Dr. Navarro was wrong. He had not reckoned on a miracle!... the miracle of Quiapo, where Joseph took his son to lay his lifeless arm on the foot of the Black Nazarene… and see him live again!

That was many years ago, and today, Joseph Arcache Jr is a strong and healthy man living in Manila, and one of the thousands who are living proof that miracles can and do happen! (*Excerpts from "Into the Strange Unknown" posted in esotericthoughts.com*)

NEW!!!
Housing Loan Program
Affordable and fast way to owning a home.

Loan Amount	PREVIOUS	NEW RATES
Up to P300,000	9%	6%
P300,001-P500,000	10%	7%
P500,001-P1,000,000	11%	10.5%
P1,000,001-P2,000,000	12%	11.5%

Here are some of the reasons why:

- ☑ the loan may be used for any housing purpose, from lot purchase and house construction to refinancing of an existing loan
- ☑ maximum loan amount of P2 million
- ☑ maximum repayment period of 30 years
- ☑ easy eligibility requirements:
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- ☑ 6% -11.5% annual interest rates, one of the lowest in the market

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Call Center: 724-4244 (Pag-IBIG)
Website: http://www.pagibigfund.gov.ph

WELL AND GOOD
Tina Juan

Keep your fitness resolutions realistic

ONE OF THE REASONS WHY people make the same fitness resolutions year after year is they have unrealistic expectations of what exercise can do for them.

People usually resolve to improve their appearance, weight, health or athletic performance.

When they do not get the results they want or when they realize how much effort is actually required to achieve their goal, they become disappointed and quit.

When a new year rolls around, the urge to make a fitness resolution reappears and the cycle begins all over again.

If you want to avoid replaying this scenario every year, you need to have realistic resolutions.

Appearance

Just as you cannot walk into a plastic surgeon's office asking to look like your favorite celebrity, you cannot expect exercise to transform your body into someone else's.

Many people choose an exercise regimen because they think it will give them the same body as their fitness idol. This belief is a setup for disappointment.

Forty-plus women who take up yoga because they think they will get Madonna's body will be frustrated when three months later, they are stronger, more flexible, calmer, more centered but not any closer to getting Madonna's physique.

If you want some inspiration, choose a role model whose age and body type closely resemble your own. However, also remember that even if you have the same genetic potential, great-looking bodies are not acquired overnight.

Madonna's enviable figure is the result of decades of consistent exercise. If this is your dream, it does not mean it is too late to start.

Just be realistic about how much time and effort you are going to have to invest in your workouts.

If you are a male and your fitness goal is to have bigger muscles, disappointment can set in if your muscles do not grow as fast as you would like them to.

It is normal to become stronger without an increase in muscle size during the first few weeks or months of a weight-lifting program. This is because muscle fibers that have never been used before are "waking up."

When all your muscle cells have been properly stimulated, then you will start to see your muscles grow.

Driving force

Weight loss is the driving force behind many fitness resolutions. If you have an obsession with the scale, you might get disappointed with exercise because the scale may not budge even if your clothes are getting looser.

You have to realize that you can lose inches and drop one or two clothes size without losing a large amount of weight.

One possible explanation is that fat cells shrink as muscle cells become denser and heavier. Another theory is that visceral fat (the fat deep in your abdominal cavity) is one of the first types of fat to be reduced due to exercise. The result is a smaller waistline at the same weight.

Health

Exercise can definitely do wonders for your health. It can help to normalize blood pressure and blood sugar levels, lower cholesterol, increase bone density, etc.

However, you have to realize that exercise is just one of the components of health improvement. Exercise cannot do it all for you. Other lifestyle factors like nutrition, sleep and stress management are equally important.

So do not expect your blood pressure to improve dramatically if you continue to eat foods high in sodium and you do not do anything to control your stress levels.

Athletic performance

You may have heard that top athletes work out to improve their performance. The fitter you are, the more strength and stamina you will have to play your sport and, of course, this will translate into better athletic performance.

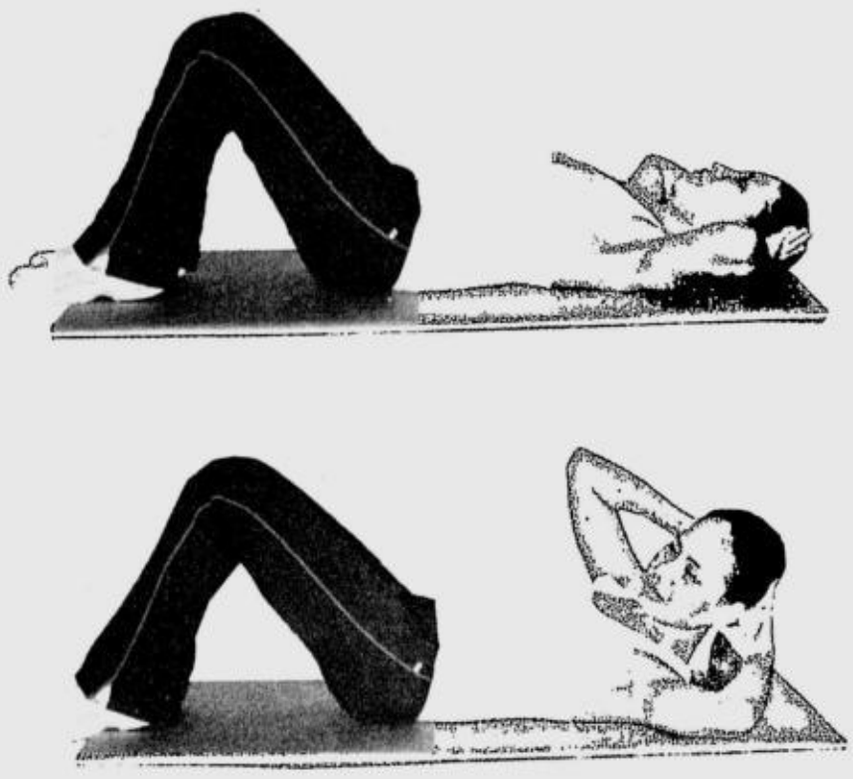
However, your exercise program has to fit the physiological needs of your sport so it is best to consult a certified athletic trainer to design a program for you. Also, remember that being fit is not the only secret of athletic success. Genetics, attitude and hours of practice are also factors.

Visit www.tinajuanfitness.info

CLIP & SAVE

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Oblique crunch



STRENGTHENS AND FIRMS the external and internal oblique muscles that crisscross the waist.

Equipment:
Exercise mat

Exercise technique:

1. Lie on your back, knees bent, feet on floor, with hands held lightly behind head.
2. Lift one shoulder and upper torso off floor, twisting toward the opposite knee.
3. Return to starting position slowly and repeat with the other side. This makes one repetition.
4. Do the desired number of repetitions.

Performance tips:

1. Keep elbows away from face to prevent pulling on head and neck.
2. Keep the lower back pressed to the floor so hips do not roll from side to side.
3. Contract your oblique muscles to twist at the waist rather than jerking the head and shoulder up.

Repetitions:

Do 10-15 repetitions twisting to the right and left. Another option is to do all repetitions toward the right, then do the other side.

International conference on liver diseases updates

HEALTH SECRETARY FRANCISCO T. DUQUE will open the 1st St. Luke's International Liver Conference, Jan. 15-16, at the Garden Ballroom of Edsa Shangri-La Hotel in Mandaluyong City.

The two-day conference features eight foreign experts who will discuss chronic hepatitis B, chronic hepatitis C, alcoholic liver disease, liver cirrhosis, hepatocellular carcinoma and metastic liver disease and hepatitis B in pregnancy.

Speakers are Dr. Samuel D. Bernal, chief, hematology and oncology, UCLA–San Fernando Valley and Sepulveda VA, Medical Center, and professor of medicine, UCLA School of Medicine; Dr. Yuman Fong, chief, gastric and mixed tumor Service, Murray F. Brennan chair and surgery, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center; Dr. Robert G. Gish, medical director of liver transplant, California Pacific Medical Center: and Dr. Patrick S. Kamath, director, advanced liver diseases study group and professor of Medicine, Mayo Clinic College of Medicine.

Also invited are Dr. Ching Lung Lai, professor of medicine and hepatology, department of medicine, University of Hong Kong; Dr. Willis C. Maddrey, executive vice president for clinical affairs, internal medicine-digestive and liver diseases, University of Texas; Dr. Teerha Piratvisuth, associate professor, Prince of Songkla University, Thailand; and Dr. Solko W. Schalm, department of gastroenterology and hepatology, Rotterdam, Netherlands.

The conference is organized by the Center for Liver Diseases of St. Luke's Medical Center, in cooperation with the St. Luke's College of Medicine-William H. Quasha Memorial, Philippine Association for the Study of Liver Diseases and the Philippine Foundation for Liver Diseases.

Call 7241737 or 7230101 local 4122 and 4123; or e-mail info@stluke.com.ph.

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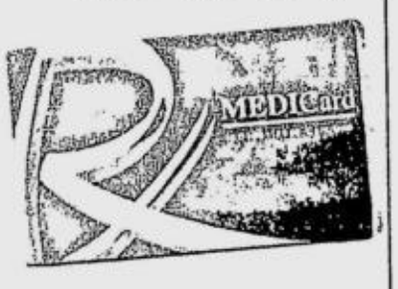
What are the most common cancers of Filipinos today?

In the Philippines, cancer is the third leading cause of morbidity and mortality after communicable and cardiovascular diseases. It can occur at any age but more frequently with advancing age. Seventy five percent (75%) of all cancers occur after the age of 50 and about 3% occurs at age 14 years and below. It is now estimated that 1 out 1000 Filipinos has cancer. Based on the 2005 Philippine Cancer Facts and Estimates, the leading cancer sites for both sexes are lung, breast, colon/rectum, liver, cervix uteri, prostate, leukemia, stomach and thyroid. For males, the 5 most common cancer sites are lung, liver, colon/rectum, prostate and stomach. On the other hand, the most common cancer sites among women are the breast, cervix uteri, lung, colon/rectum and ovary. The increasing incidence of lung cancer is related to the growing number of smokers among Filipinos. Data from the same cancer registries indicated that the top three mortality cancer sites in males were lung, liver and leukemia, and among females were breast, lung and cervix uteri. Every year, the number of cancer-related deaths increases by thousands due to the low level of cancer awareness. Therefore, everyone should understand the importance of regular medical check-ups as a way to detect cancer early on since at least a third of all cancers can be cured if detected early and most cancers are actually preventable with proper healthy lifestyle.



This week's answer to our feature question was provided by our medical service provider at Cagayan De Oro Medical Center in Cagayan De Oro City, Dr. Reyna Christy Aparece-Abas. Dra. Abas is specializes in IM-Oncology. She obtained her medical degree at Dr. Jose P. Rizal College Cebu Institute of Medicine. She took her residency training for Internal Medicine in 2000 and finished her subspecialty training for Oncology in 2004 at UP-PGH. She is a fellow/diplomate of the Philippine College of Physicians, Philippine Society of Medical Oncology and a member of Misamis Oriental Medical Society. Dr. Abas is married and blessed with one child. MEDICard members may visit her at Cagayan De Oro Medical Center, Mondays thru Fridays from 1pm-5pm

MEDICard's Medical Director, Dr. Nicky Montoya answers questions on health through the assistance and expertise of MEDICard's network of accredited specialists. Write to Dr. Nicky or E-mail him at inquiry@medicardphils.com for your inquiries on health matters.

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INNER AWARENESS
Jaime T. Licauco

Setting the record straight

Part I

I AM GLAD THAT MAGICIAN James Randi replied to my column of Oct. 24, 2006. (See PDI, Dec. 12, 2006) so we can set records straight and determine who is lying.

I shall answer his statements point by point.

1. Randi: "I have never used the name ('The Great Randi'), even when I was residing in the Philippines and performing on the nightclub circuit."

I admit my mistake here. The name he uses in his public performances is "The Amazing Randi." He probably realized he was not that great.

2. Randi: "We offer a million-dollar prize to anyone who could provide any evidence of a paranormal event or ability, not just telekinesis, and have done so for 10 years now. Note though that [Jaime] Licauco claims he has paranormal abilities, but he has not applied for the prize, which he should be able to win easily."

That's a lie. I have never claimed to have any paranormal or psychic ability. I don't know where Randi got that idea.

In fact, every time somebody asks me if I am a psychic, my standard answer is: "No, I'm a psycho." To the question "Are you a mystic?" my answer is: "No, I'm a mistake."

Scientifically proven

But seriously, I don't have to prove to Randi that ESP (extra sensory perception) ability (such as telepathy, clairvoyance and telekinesis) exists. This has been proven scientifically long ago.

Randi conveniently failed to comment on scientific experiments by Dr. Robert Jahn and Brenda Dunne at Princeton University that proved that certain people did have telekinetic powers.

I mentioned these studies in my Oct. 24 article, but Randi conveniently chose to ignore them.

Before the Princeton University experiments, Dr. J.B. Rhine of Duke University in North Carolina proved the existence of telepathy in repeated controlled experiments beginning in the 1930s.

"One of the many students tested with the new Zener cards, a sophomore named A.J. Linzmayer," as reported by Richard Broughton, Ph.D, in his book "Parapsychology, The Controversial Science" (1991, Ballantine Books), "displayed a consistent ability to guess cards better than chance—404 correct out of 1,500 where 300 would be expected by chance. The following year Linzmayer provided another 2,000 trials and continued to guess above chance."

From 1970-1990, physicists Dr. Russell Targ and Dr. Harold Puthoff of the Stanford Research Institute (now called SRI International) in Menlo Park, California, conducted one of the longest experiments on remote viewing [known as traveling clairvoyance] under controlled conditions.

They proved beyond doubt that most people could project their sense of awareness to distant places they had never been to and describe them accurately.

I modified the scientific protocol developed at SRI but came up with similar results.

At the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands, the late professor Tenhaeff investigated and documented the extraordinary clairvoyant and psychometric abilities of the peasant Gerard Croiset and was convinced he was a genuine psychic.

All Randi needs to do is go over the numerous scientific papers written about these phenomena in several countries including the United States, Canada, Germany and Russia to know there is such a thing as psychic ability and paranormal phenomena.

But I doubt if he will ever do that. It is much more sensational to debunk psychics in the media than do solid research.

On rule changes

3. Randi quoted my statement: "When somebody comes up to prove telekinesis, Randi changes the rules. He always finds loopholes so that, in the end, he concludes nothing is proven."

Randi: "Again he [Licauco] is absolutely wrong. No change in rules has ever taken place, and all applicants who have been tested have attested in writing, that the conditions and parameters of the test were correct and acceptable."

Here again the Amazing Randi is talking through his magician's hat. In the 1980s, when the reward he offered was $10,000, he admitted to Dennis Rawlins, a colleague in the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP): "I always have an out."

Here is the passage from which the above quotation was taken, in the words of Rawlins himself, in the detailed 38-page expose "Star Baby" published in the September 1983 issue of Fate Magazine.

Rawlins wrote: "Next Randi (and soon afterward Bob Sheaffer) tried to get me involved in new projects, i.e. diversions. As part of his effort Randi asked my advice on the Helmut Schmidt parapsychology experiment which some CSICOP's had been investigating. I simply urged that it be approached with all the caution KZA had thrown to the winds in 1975 and 1976.

"He assured me how cautious he was in the testing for his well-publicized $10,000 prize for proof of psychic abilities (for which he acts as policeman, judge and jury)—and thus never has supported my idea of neutral judgment of CSICOP tests. 'I always have an out,' he said."

Randi: "Furthermore, as Licauco well knows—but failed to tell his readers—no conclusion is arrived at by me; that decision is entirely in the hands of independent observers."

That is not true at all in the light of Rawlins' statement that Randi acts as "policeman, judge and jury."

Who then is lying?

Visually impaired children get help

TWO WELL-KNOWN ORGANIZATIONS are helping reduce the incidence of blindness in children through "Sight for Kids."

Lions Clubs International (LCI) is recognized worldwide for its service to the blind and visually impaired. Johnson and Johnson Vision Care, on the other hand, is an international company dedicated to providing exceptional vision correction options.

A recent study by the United States National Eye Institute indicated that a child went blind every minute and half a million children in Asia could lose their eyesight in one year.

Launched in other Asian countries, the project offers free screenings and eye-health education to children. It also gives children with visual problems eye examinations and prescription glasses at no cost.

In the Philippines, the project targets underprivileged and disadvantaged children. LCI and J&J Vision Care will be going around public schools, initially in Metro Manila. By next year, the project expects to cover all public schools nationwide.

The "Sight for Kids" project was recently launched at the T. Paez Elementary School in Pasay City.

The event was attended by George Yuquico, project chair of Sight for Kids Philippines; among others.

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LIFESTYLE

Get up and run!

IN THE ERA OF FAST-PACED urban lifestyles, engaging in physical activity has become increasingly a tall order. However, more and more people have found a way to meet the need by running.

Running is definitely a hassle-free way to meet one's health needs. With the proliferation of exercise communities throughout the metropolis, it is evident that a growing number of individuals, both young and old, is getting into the morning routine of running. Running has become the sport of choice for more and more people.

So whether you want to engage in the sport competitively or you are looking for a new way to keep in shape, you cannot go wrong with a good run. It offers convenience, not to mention excitement, as a way to stay in shape.

Not only does running help you stay fit but it is also medicine for your whole body. Running helps you stay alert and think clearly because it doubles the brain's oxygen supply, thus increasing learning capacity and creativity. It also boosts the immune system, improves blood supply, builds up your resistance, improves muscle metabolism, and strengthens the heart and lungs.

Just make sure to make it a habit to exercise most, if not all, days of the week.

Busy people who cannot seem to find the time to exercise will be happy to know that working out after a day in the office works just as well. In fact, it may be the best time of day to work out because this allows physical activity to stay in tune with your biological rhythm.

But early morning runs have the advantage of generally less pollution and traffic. Besides, you get to meet fellow runners in your neighborhood. Aside from making you healthier in the long run, it will help you get to work or school on time.

But if you are intimidated by the idea of running and are having a hard time finding the motivation, understanding the sport and a few helpful tips on how to get started can make a world of difference. Here are a few running tidbits and tips from the experts:

Beginning runners should pace themselves. Beginners are those who have not yet done 60 minutes of uninterrupted jogging. If you are a beginner, you should make sure that during your session you are free of breathing problems and capable of chatting comfortably.

Start slowly. Always begin your running sessions at a slow pace. Just like a car, which we cannot expect to go at 180 km per hour right away, people, too, have to build up running speed.

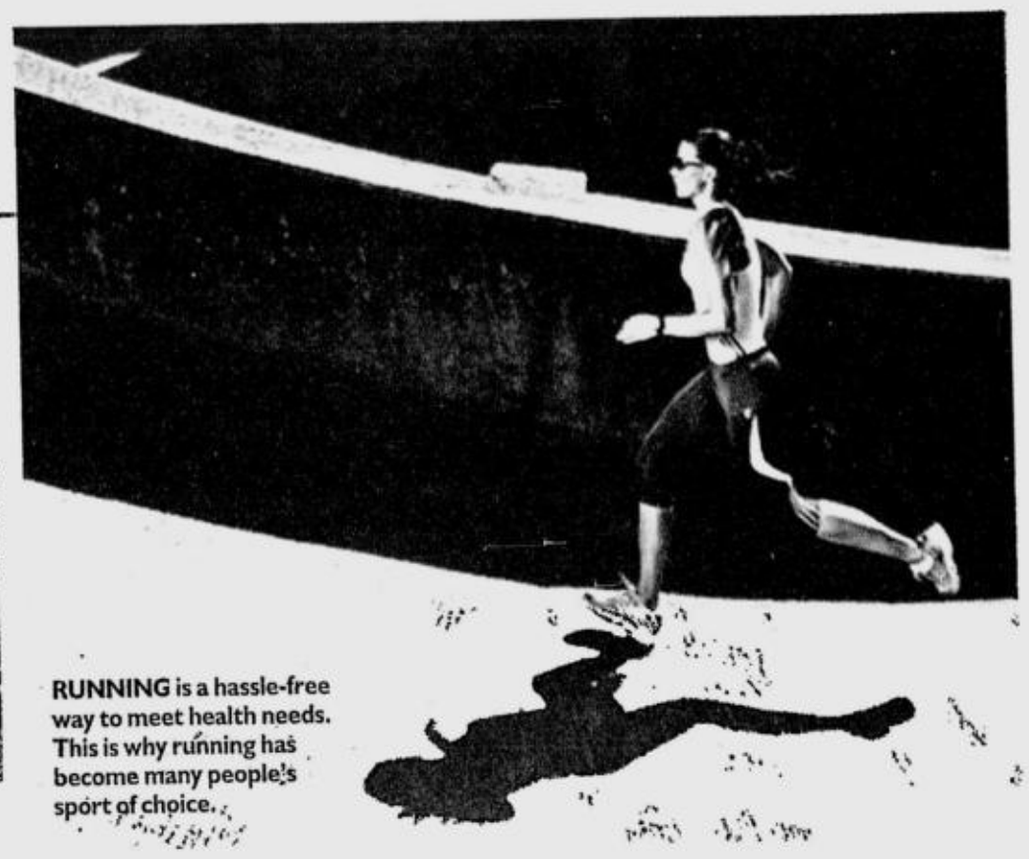
Allow time intervals between meals and running sessions. About 2-3 hours between your last big meal and your workout; 30-60 minutes for smaller meals.

Proper movement is needed. For a smooth run and less strain on the back, knees and ankles, use heel-to-toe movement of the feet. Swing your arms freely while pivoting your shoulders.

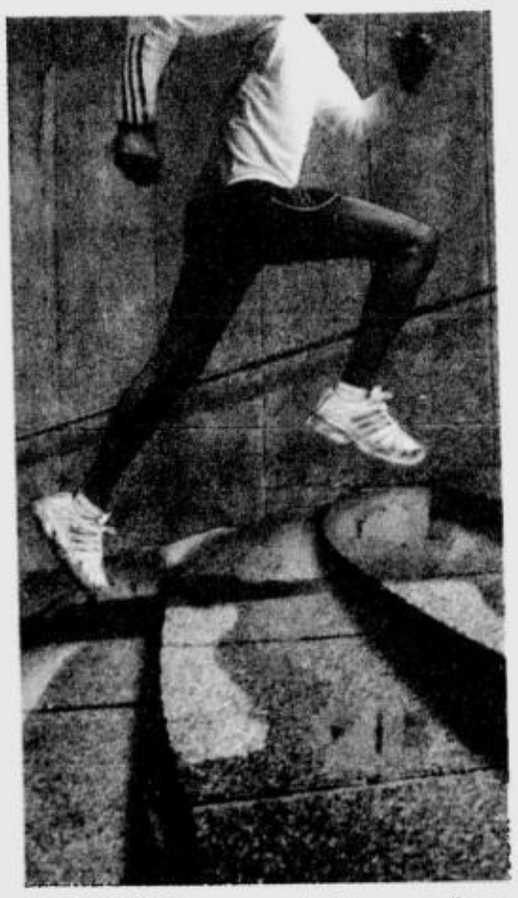
Build endurance. It will take months or years before the body is capable of running longer distances. Increase mileage by 10 percent every month to allow your body to adapt to the higher intensities at minimum risk. Alternate hard running days with lighter running to help the body recover from intense sessions.

Choose the right footwear. Invest in a good pair of running shoes. This will help insulate your feet against any bone or joint damage that may be caused by running over asphalt. Take time to find a pair that complements your running style perfectly.

TO RUN smoothly with less strain, swing the arms freely while pivoting the shoulders.



RUNNING is a hassle-free way to meet health needs. This is why running has become many people's sport of choice.



IF RUNNING is your exercise, increase mileage by 10 percent every month to let the body adapt to higher intensities at minimum risk.

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NICK CADE
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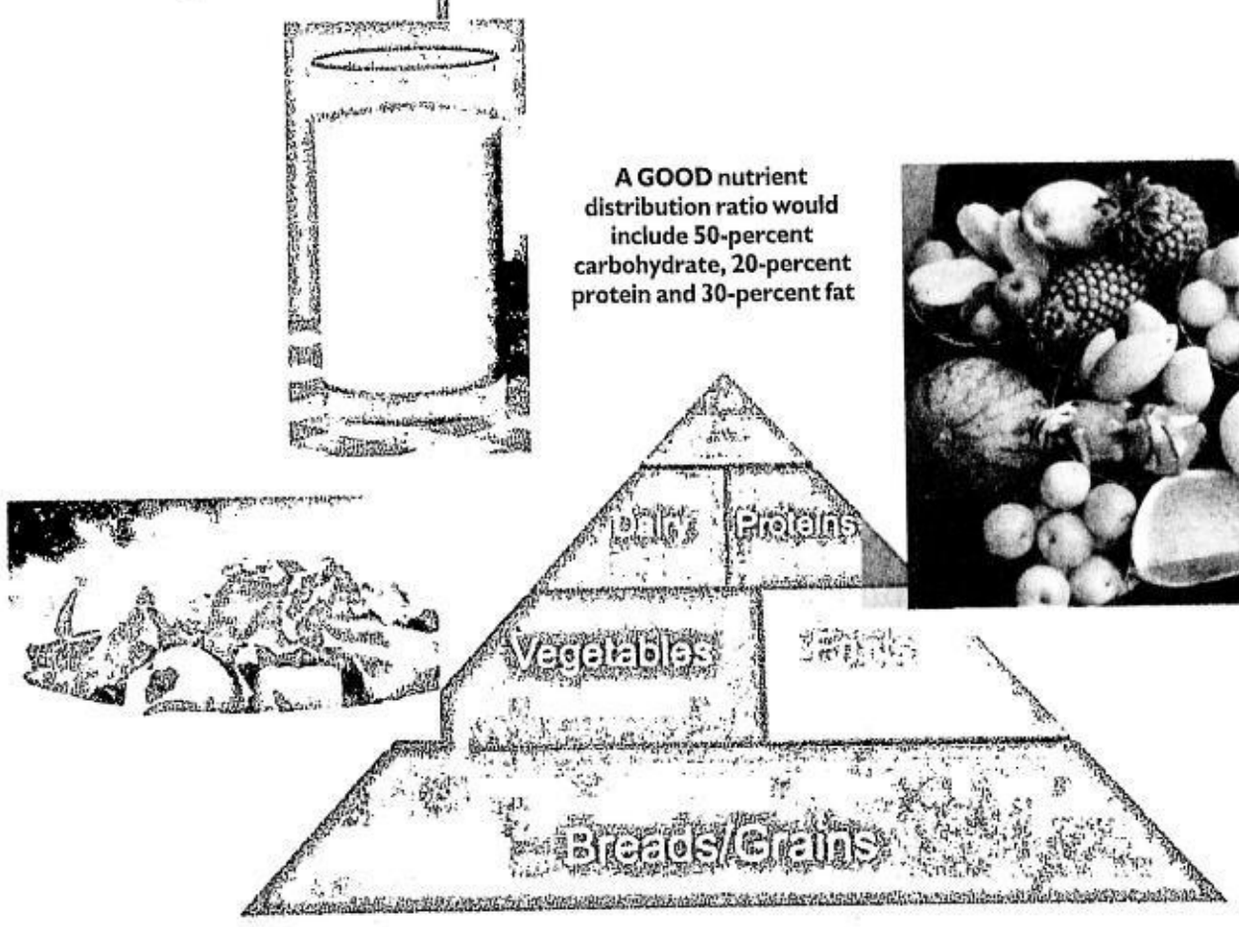
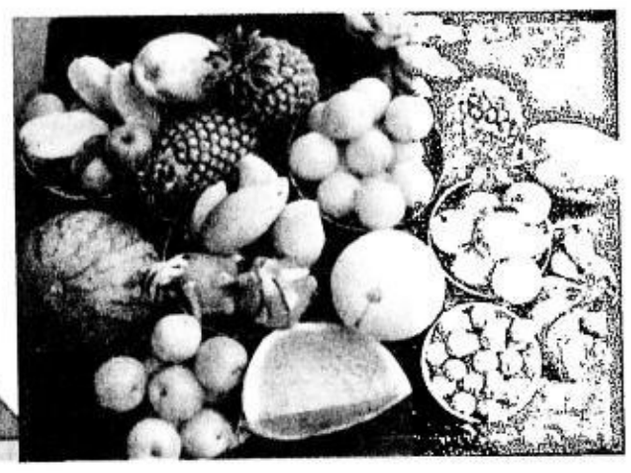
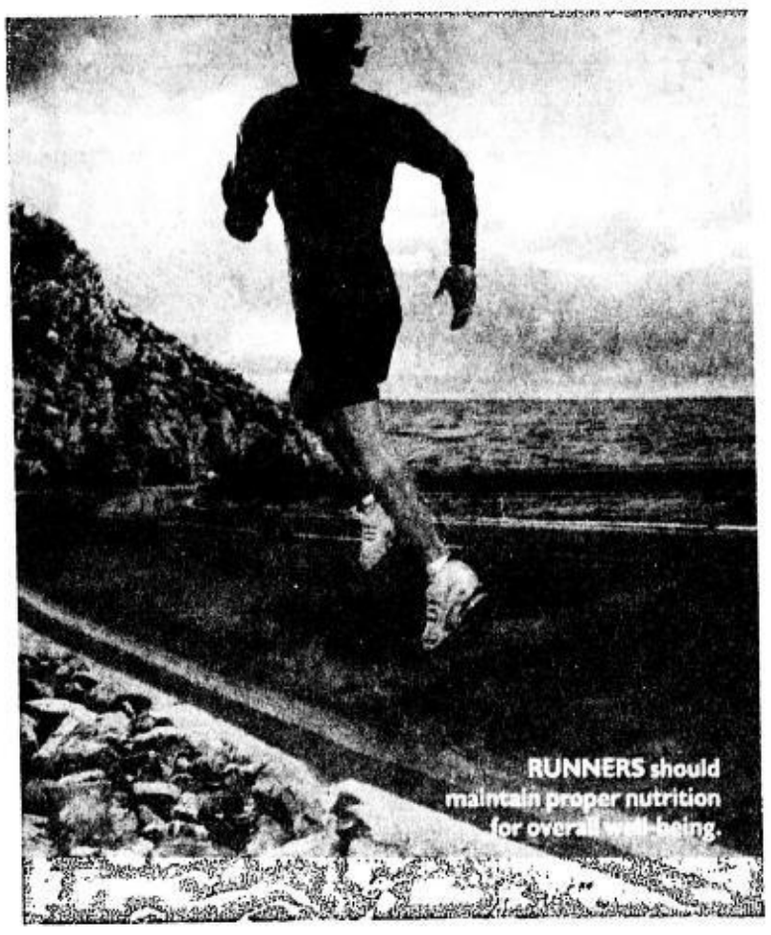
Proper nutrition for runners



A GOOD nutrient distribution ratio would include 50-percent carbohydrate, 20-percent protein and 30-percent fat





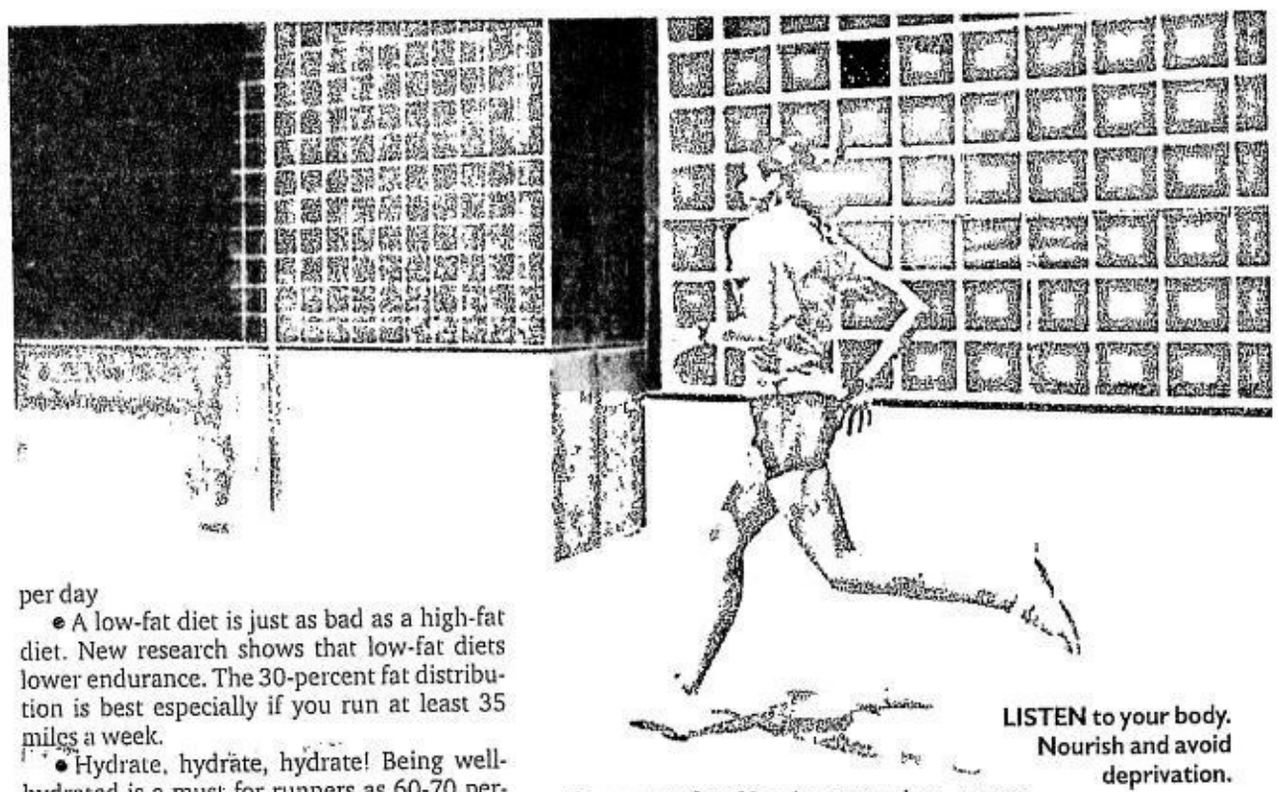
RUNNERS should maintain proper nutrition for overall well-being.

NUTRITION EXPERT LUZ FELICIDAD Callanta advises runners never to take good nutrition for granted. She offers a few tips:

- If you average 15 or more miles per week you will need around 2,000 or more calories spread over the whole day. If you are running 25 miles per week you should average closer to 2,500 calories a day.
- A good nutrient distribution ratio would include:

1. 50-percent carbohydrate (from fruits, vegetables and whole grains)
2. 20-percent protein (runners need about 80 grams of protein/day)
3. 30-percent fat (two to three servings/week of a fatty fish for your omega-3 fats)

- A high-protein diet does not supply your body with enough carbohydrates to fuel your running. Cutting your carbohydrate intake will force your body to use protein to make sugar for brain fuel resulting in a condition called ketosis, which is a partial breakdown of body fats leading to increased fluid loss.
- To get enough protein each day, consume about five to six ounces of lean meat (Note: ounces not servings, and lean meat, not greasy hamburgers), two to three servings of soy/day or three servings of low-fat dairy products.
- Eat about 10 servings of grains, seven servings of fruit, four servings of vegetables per day
- A low-fat diet is just as bad as a high-fat diet. New research shows that low-fat diets lower endurance. The 30-percent fat distribution is best especially if you run at least 35 miles a week.
- Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate! Being well-hydrated is a must for runners as 60-70 percent of our body is water. When we sweat out our body's water content, we must consume more water to keep our core temperature down.

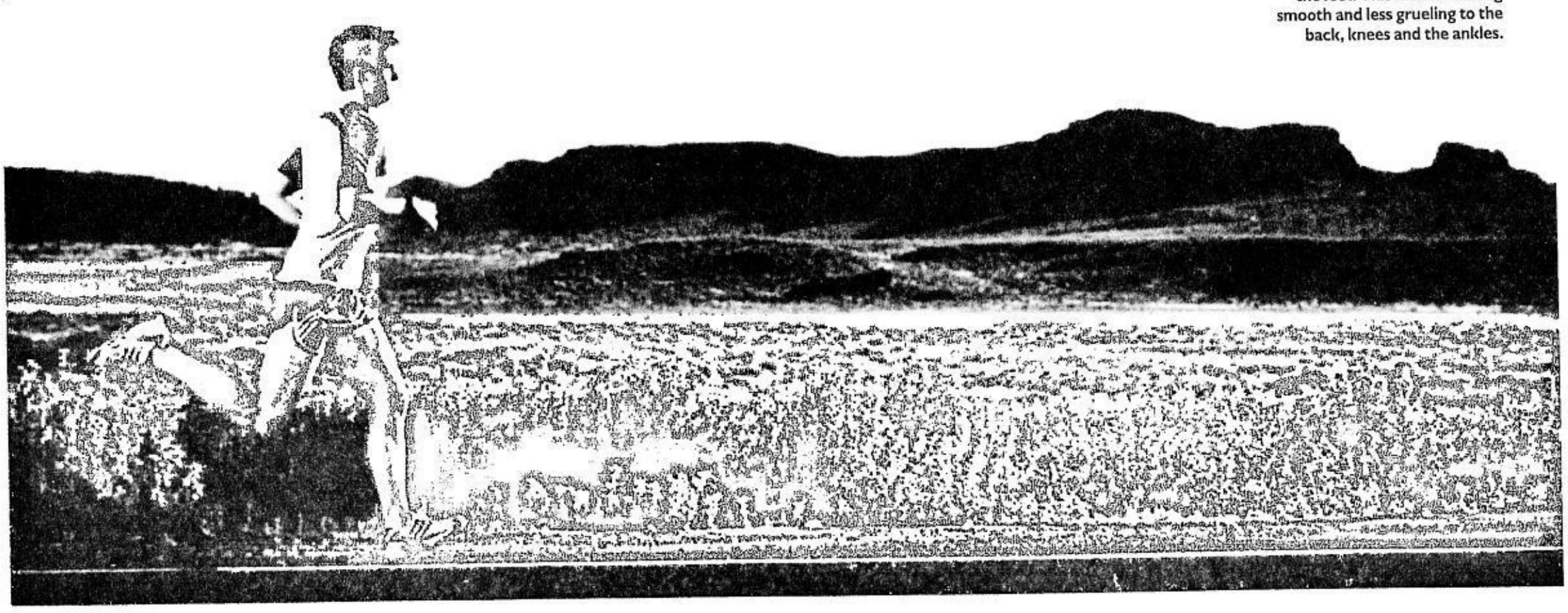


LISTEN to your body. Nourish and avoid deprivation.

If you run for 60 minutes or less, water alone should be fine for hydration. But if you run for more than an hour at a time, you have to replenish electrolytes as well. For this you can use sports drinks.

- Drink at least two to three cups of water or a sports drink two to three hours before running (or exercising) then one to 1½ cups 10-20 minutes before the run. A good practice is to weigh yourself before working out. Afterwards, weigh yourself again. Drink two cups for every pound you lose.
- Drinking excessive amounts of water can lead to a life-threatening condition called hyponatremia where the sodium content of the blood is diluted. You can prevent this by hydrating with sports drinks that help replace sodium losses.
- If you run daily, you can expect to need to eat every three to five hours. An interval of five hours is acceptable between meals/snacks as it takes your stomach about this long to empty its contents. Avoid long periods without eating to regulate your blood sugar levels. Remember that skipping meals does not support the goal of training with adequately fueled muscles.
- It is always wise to listen to your body. Sometimes you may exhibit cravings. They can result from too low fat intake or low blood sugar, both of which problems are common among runners who do not eat enough. So, if you have cravings, give in to them. A pizza night is not going to create havoc in your body. Perhaps add a vegetable salad or fruit. The important thing is that your craving is eliminated.

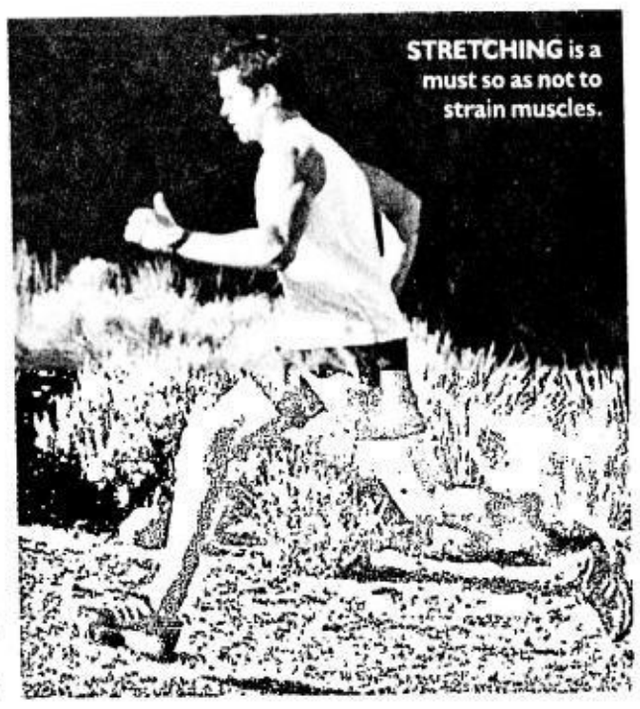
USE heel-to-toe movement of the feet. This makes running smooth and less grueling to the back, knees and the ankles.



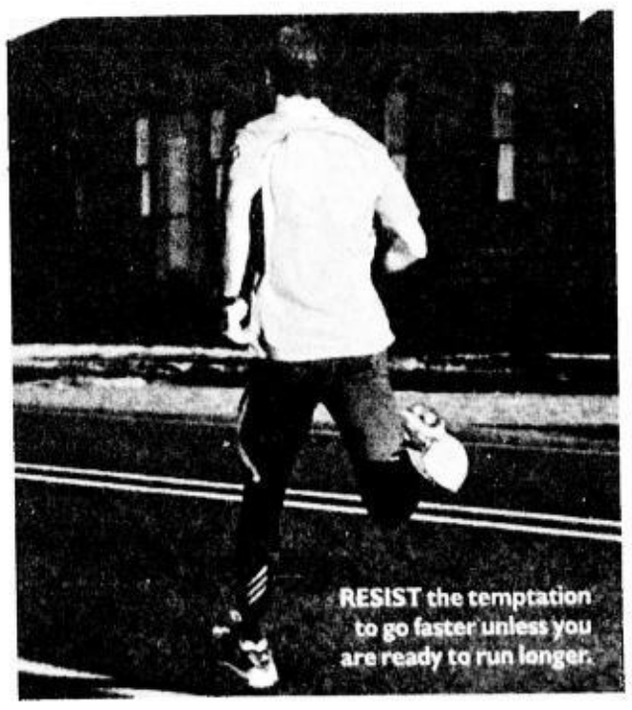
How to maximize gains from running

RUNNING MAKES A LOT OF DEMANDS ON the body. There are ways to ease these demands to maximize the gains from running. Here are a few exercise tips for runners from Hercules Callanta, dean of the College of Human Kinetics of the University of the Philippines.

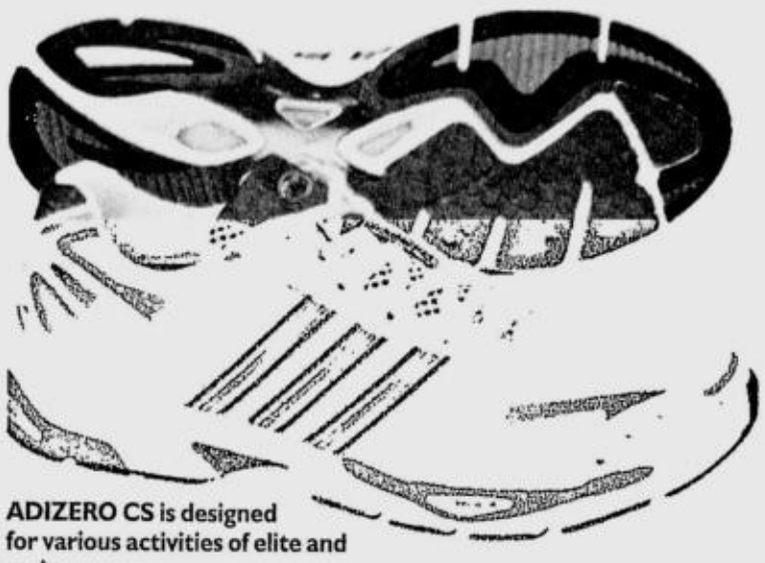
- Take time to warm-up before a run by stretching dynamically for five to 10 minutes. Avoid bouncing stretches. Instead do smooth, full range movements.
- Start slow for about five to eight minutes, giving yourself enough time to stabilize physiologically.
- Use heel-to-toe movement of the feet. This makes running smooth and less grueling to the back, knees and the ankles.
- Make sure to swing your arms freely, pivoting from the shoulders.
- Make sure you use speed appropriately. A recreational runner should run at a "conversational pace" while a serious runner may go faster.
- Resist the temptation to go faster unless you are already conditioned enough to run longer (i.e., 30 minutes or so)
- Give yourself enough distance (around 200-400 meters or so) to cool down with a slow jog or a walk.
- Stretch statically (20-30 second per position) after cooling down. Concentrate your stretches on the hamstrings, the calves, the hips and the back—the body parts that get stiff most from running.
- Since running is heavy on the lower extremities, complement it with upper body exercises like push-ups, pull-ups, trunk and core strengthening exercises.
- Do strength and power exercises to improve your running time as well as your ability to manage uphill courses.
- Alternate hard running days with easy running days to give your body a chance to recover from hard running days.
- Make it a habit to exercise regularly, on most or all days of the week, to ensure optimum adaptation and gains from the exercise.



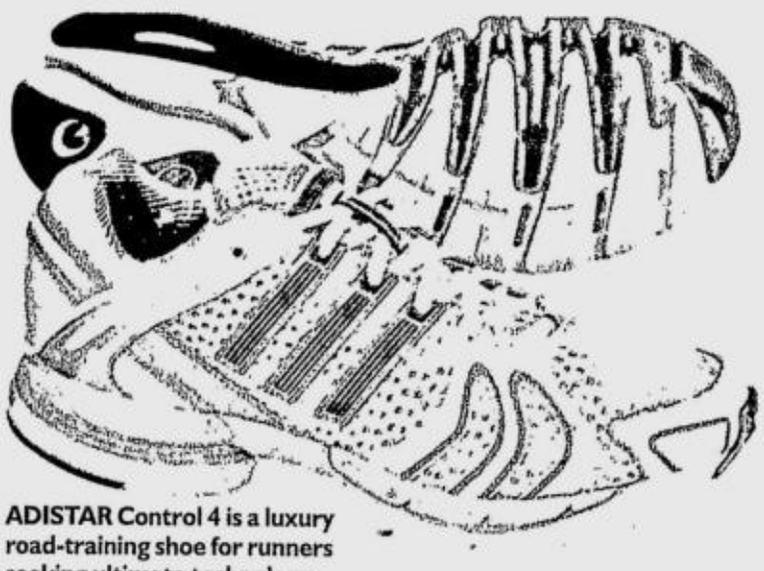
STRETCHING is a must so as not to strain muscles.



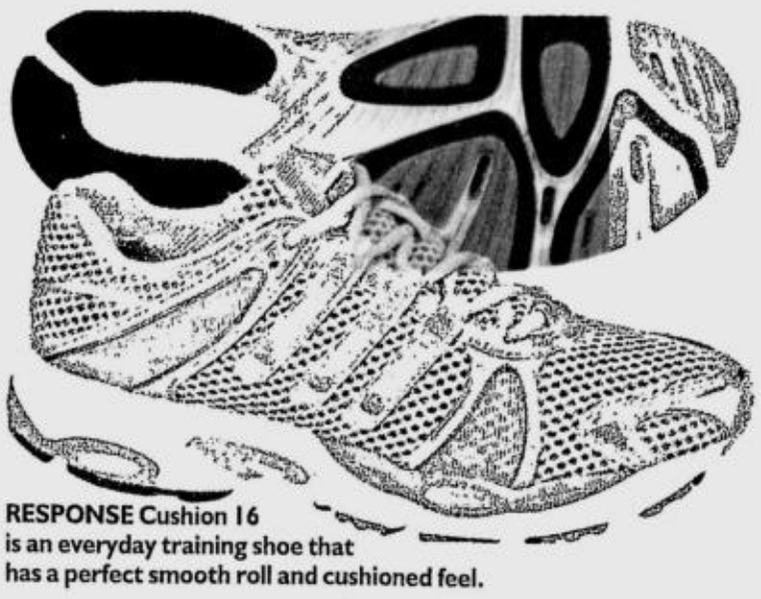
RESIST the temptation to go faster unless you are ready to run longer.



ADIZERO CS is designed for various activities of elite and serious runners.



ADISTAR Control 4 is a luxury road-training shoe for runners seeking ultimate technology.



RESPONSE Cushion 16 is an everyday training shoe that has a perfect smooth roll and cushioned feel.

The right shoe for you

WONDERING WHAT THE PERFECT SHOE IS for you?

It begins with the question: "What kind of runner are you?" Adidas helps you make your choices by determining the kind of run you want.

The Competition series is defined by thin soles with excellent rebound quality. In the series is the Adizero CS for serious runners who aim to break records and defy their limits. This high-performance shoe features a dynamic forefoot that propels a runner forward, and a superb mid-sole cushioning compound for an amazing, effortless sprint. It is Microfit-engineered to ensure superb comfort, especially for Asian runners who have wider feet.

The highly permeable Adizero BR, on the other hand, is designed for aspiring and urban runners, who jog for health and fitness.

Both models have the unique Climacool technology that allows feet to breathe.

For maximum impact absorption, Adidas designed the Cushion series. Engineered for the runner wanting overall comfort during runs on hard surfaces, the Supernova 6 uses ForMotion, the most advanced footwear technology, for full-length cushioning and smooth heel-to-toe transition.

SUPERNOVA Cushion 6 is engineered with the advanced ForMotion technology.

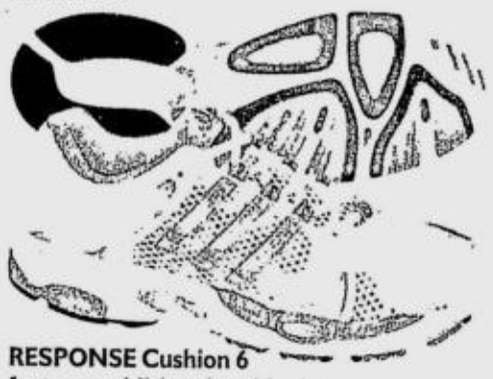
SUPERNOVA Cushion 6 offers cushion and comfort on hard surfaces.

Response CSH 16 is for the everyday 60-90 kg roadrunner looking for a shoe combining best price and performance. It has a smooth roll-off and cushioned feel and provides unparalleled stability for heavier runners.

Safety-conscious runners can rely on the Adidas Control models with high motion controllability and support. The AdiStar Control 4 has a dynamic blend of stability and comfort. It reduces the amount of jarring to the lower legs and knees for a stable ride, and has the smoothest heel-to-toe transition. The AdiStar Control 4 is built to accommodate runners with orthotics as well.

All Adidas performance running shoes have 3D Torsion for mid-foot integrity and medial support, and 360-degree reflectivity, practical when running in low-light conditions. Its patented adiPRENE feature ensures neutral stance, added cushioning, and smoother transition.

Adidas running shoes are made for speed and endurance.



RESPONSE Cushion 6 features additional cushioning.

ADISTAR Control 4 is built to accommodate heavier runners.

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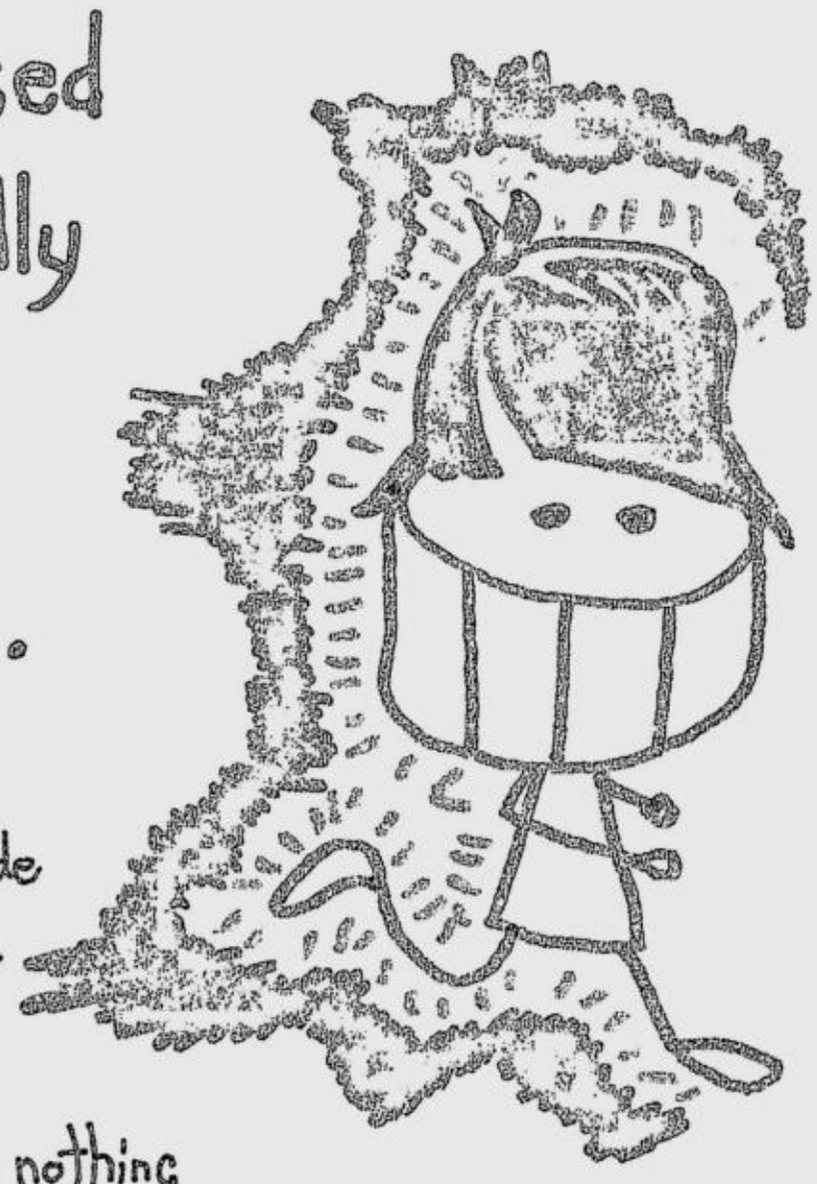
halfway thru my run
I realised
I actually
felt
good.



Fernanda V Tedde
rio de janeiro.
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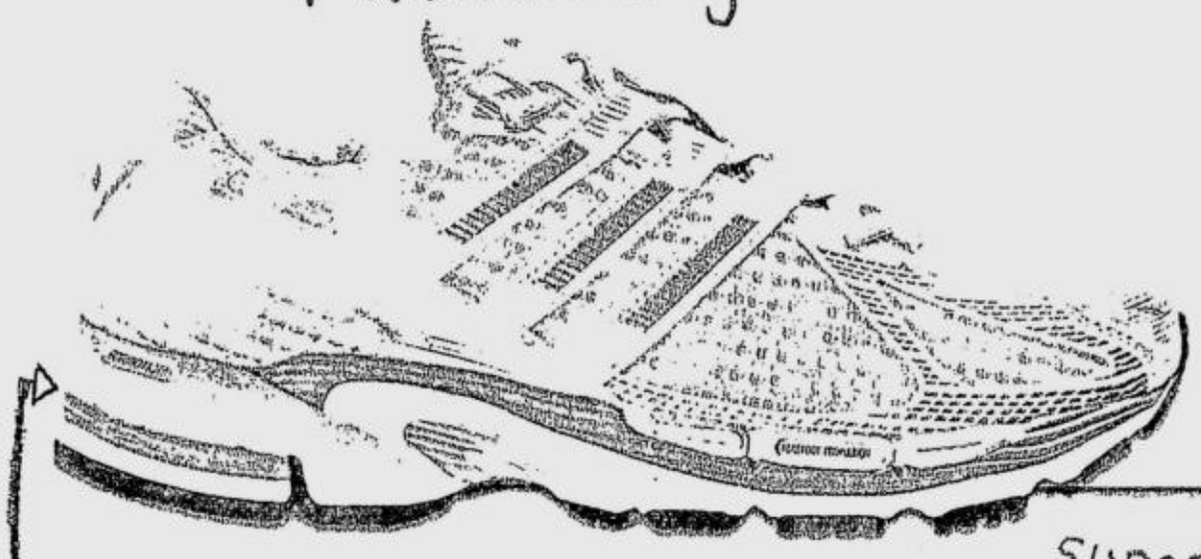
impossible is nothing



Supernova cushion

FORMOTION® ADJUSTS TO GIVE YOU COMFORT AND STABILITY SO YOU FEEL GOOD THROUGHOUT YOUR RUN.

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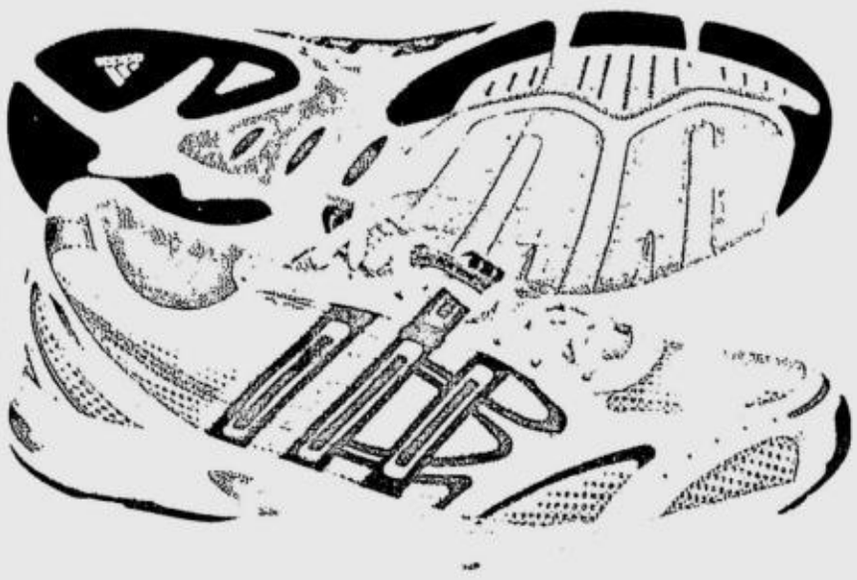
Are you ready to put these shoes to the test?

ADIDAS is launching Test Run 28, a program that gives customers 28 days to test the shoes they choose and, if not satisfied, get their money back without question.



ADIZERO Breeze is a highly air-permeable training model made with Microfit.

FOR RUNNERS, THE CHOICE OF SHOE IS so critical. The right shoe helps avoid injuries, provides protection and makes the entire running experience more physically comfortable.

In a bold move to show its confidence in its running product range, Adidas is launching Test Run 28, an aggressive program that gives customers who purchase from its range of running footwear 28 days to test the shoes. If they are not satisfied, they get their money back without question!

There may be other money-back guarantee programs but Test Run 28 redefines the concept as it pushes the superior technologies of Adidas running shoes to the ultimate test-drive. The Test Run 28 initiative is the first and only one of its kind, not only in the sport industry but in any market.

"We want to share this confidence with our consumers and what better way to communicate that than offering them Test Run 28? This initiative is part of Adidas Philippines' way of continuously seeking means to enhance our service to our consumers," says Joey Singian, managing director of Adidas Philippines.

Just how good are these road warriors to merit this kind of brand confidence?

Adidas offers a line of running footwear that does the job. The three-striped kicks belonging to the AdiZero, Supernova, Response and AdiStar families offer the best in control, cushion and competition for the fun, serious and elite runner.

Each family has shoes for terrain ranging from road to racing. Runners can choose shoes for maximum cushioning or to stabilize their over-pronation, as well as varying widths to cater to the wider Asian feet.

The AdiZero CS is a high performance shoe designed for elite and serious runners while the AdiZero Breeze (BR) is designed for entry-level and urban runners who jog for health and weight control. The Supernova CSH 6 and Response CSH 16 kicks put premium on cushion. Both models are excellent in absorbing strong impact when the heel first lands on the ground without fault. Finally, the AdiStar Control 4 is the ultimate running companion that offers an unsurpassed smooth and even ride, for the most comfortable heel-to-toe transition.

All Adidas running shoes also contain one or more of the patented Adidas technologies like the adiPRENE and adiPRENE plus midsole cushioning compound, 3D Torsion, Climacool, 360-degree reflectivity, adiWEAR heel plug and For Motion, the most advanced footwear technology in the market.

Which one is for you?

So how do you determine what kind of Adidas running shoe is right for you?

The answer depends on information on weight, height, main usage of shoes (marathon, jogging, speed training), kilometers logged per week and estimated time of finish in a 10k race. A Shoe Guide included in the Test Run 28 warranty card must be filled out in order to determine whether you are a fun, serious or elite runner. The type of running shoe under the Test Run 28 promo that is right for your particular needs is then recommended by an authorized sales representative.

It is important to note that the Test Run 28 guarantee applies only to recommended shoes after proper evaluation based on answers to the Shoe Guide. Adidas advises you to stay within your regular running routine to prevent injury.

Anyone interested in participating in the Test Run 28 program is invited to join the Test Run 28 on-tour scheduled this year from January to June. There will be a Test Run 28 roadshow starting Jan. 28 at the University of the Philippines outdoors.

February takes the Test Run 28 on-tour to Outdoor Greenhills (Feb. 4) and Alabang (Feb. 18). In March, the outdoor date will be on the 18th at The Fort.

More outdoor dates are in the offing: UP on April 1 and Greenhills, April 22; Alabang Village on May 13 and Quezon Memorial Circle, May 27; and UP on June 3. The Test Run 28 on-tour will culminate in May with a 100,000 run during the KOTR (King of the Road) National Finals.

So don't just try these shoes on, try them out. Test Run 28 is the ultimate satisfaction guarantee and it is only offered by Adidas!

For the complete schedule of the Test Run 28 on-tour, visit participating Test Run 28 outlets at Alabang Town Center, Greenbelt 3, SM Megamall, Shangri-La Plaza EDSA, Glorietta 2, Powerplant Mall, The Gateway, Shoppesville. Participating Toby's branches include Glorietta, Mall of Asia and Megamall. Participating Athlete's Foot branches include Glorietta and Robinsons Place Ermita.

Test the ForMotion™ technology in a pair of Supernova Cushion or adiStar Control for four weeks. If you don't enjoy your run more, we'll give you a refund.

ADIDAS AdiStar Control 4 offers unsurpassed smooth and even ride slowing down the over-pronation velocity.

adidas.com/running

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Emmie G. Velarde

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This delicate job of creating stars

JENNYLYN MERCADO

MARK HERRAS

MARKY CIELO

JACKIE RICE

By Nini Valera

TELEVISION DIRECTOR LOUIE IGNACIO ("I Luv New York," "SOP," "Pinoy Pop Superstar," "Sis," "Mel and Joey") is big on attitude, especially when it comes to choosing who would emerge as the ultimate survivors in the talent search show, "Starstruck The Next Level," aired on GMA 7.

"They put me here, so I don't care what people might say," Ignacio told INQUIRER Entertainment, referring to his role as member of the Starstruck Council, whose combined ratings of the finalists' performance make up 50 percent of the total scores.

The other 50 percent comes from viewers' text votes. The other council members are actress Lorna Tolentino and talent manager Douglas Quijano.

"Even if a contestant had all the [qualities] of a potential star—talent, looks, mass appeal—he or she would still fail in my book if he or she had an attitude," Ignacio stressed. "If they want to last in show biz, they'd better not have attitude."

He prides himself in being able to immediately spot "difficult" ones: "Those that I said were *pasaway* (incorrigible) last year were really that, especially now that they have become popular."

Ignacio cited the case of Jackie Rice, Iwa Moto and Jana Roxas from the last batch. Along with two others, they were caught looking at voting results on a computer that was off-limits to them.

"Right there and then, I castigated them and put them in the 'attitude box'," Ignacio recalled. "I gave them a score of zero. That night, their text votes had to be perfect for them to survive the contest."

The overwhelming number of text votes that Rice, Moto and Roxas received that night managed to pull up Ignacio's 0 score. All three made it. Rice went on to become last year's ultimate survivor, along with Marky Cielo. Moto and Roxas are currently mainstays of some GMA 7 shows.

Among the "Starstruck" batches, Ignacio said, the first one produced the most professional young stars in his estimation—Jennylyn Mercado and Mark Herras. "That's why they're still very popular," he noted. "They did not give us any headaches, even after they became big."

THIS/ E2

FUN SNAPS FROM 2006

TOILET HUMOR. Tessie Tomas is not entirely kidding when she cracks that the scarlet-painted washroom in her posh pad captures the Scorpion in her. She also claims her friends suddenly become amorous after using this comfort room. Think French bordello crossed with a Shanghai opium den. Teysi's delight in it is captured by lensman Jim Guiao Punzalan for INQUIRER Entertainment's Living Stars section. She lets us in on a little secret: She got the mirror and crystal lamp from a flea market.

Readers thrilled about Lino-KC match

I WAS SWAMPED WITH E-MAIL AND TEXT messages regarding my scoop on Direk **Lino Cayetano** dating **KC Concepcion**. People are thrilled about the match! Looks like the lovebirds are making the most of their time together before KC flies back to school in Paris.

They were with some friends in Boracay after Christmas and they came back to Manila in time for New Year's Eve. The cute couple were also spotted in Serendra. Heard that they watched "Enteng Kabisote 3" and "Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo" in Alabang Town Center.

KC CONCEPCION

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

Seems they can't have enough of each other's company. Cheesy as it may sound, what better way to welcome the New Year than by having a new dear?

Daring move

Is **Roxanne Guinoo**'s sexy billboard for a liquor drink an indication that she's ripe for daring roles? Has she become more liberated ever since she split up with **Joross Gamboa**? She clarifies, "*Matagal nang plano 'yung* billboard. *Nagkataon lang na wala na kami ni* Joross when it came out. I'm not ready for bold roles, just more serious roles." And is **Mark Herras** seriously courting her? She laughs. "We just met during **Sandara**'s birthday party. *Di pala siya suplado*. But he's not courting me."

She's a *kapamilya*. He's a *kapuso*. Is that a hindrance? Or is all fair in love and (network) war?

Great bonding

I saw **Bing Loyzaga** and **Mylene Dizon** shopping at Zara, Shangri-La Mall. Great bonding for separated women like them (and me as well). After all, looking good is the best revenge. If only there were more interesting choices in men as there are in clothes.

No comment

I texted *ma cherie amie* **Dina Bonnevie** for her sentiments about **Oyo Boy**'s split up with **Angel Locsin**. She replied, "Sorry, Oyo warned me not to comment." Much earlier, Dina told me that Oyo is the type who loves too much. Maybe he should just keep on loving so that it will stop hurting. Love is stronger than pain. Love remains. Pain stays only if we let it.

Model Jolens

With all the scandals that plague the industry, it's always refreshing to hear about whole-

READERS/ E2

FEEDBACK

Thanks, Ruben

From Ellen Ongkeko Marfil

Hi Ruben,

I just finished reading your interview with Angelina Jolie. It was such a wonderful read, it made my day.

It is so nice to get to know people (yup, your interview gives that effect, as if I know her already) who can remain grounded despite the fame and can actually put their fame to good use. Of course, her few words on Brad Pitt was such a turn-on.

Proud Pinoys

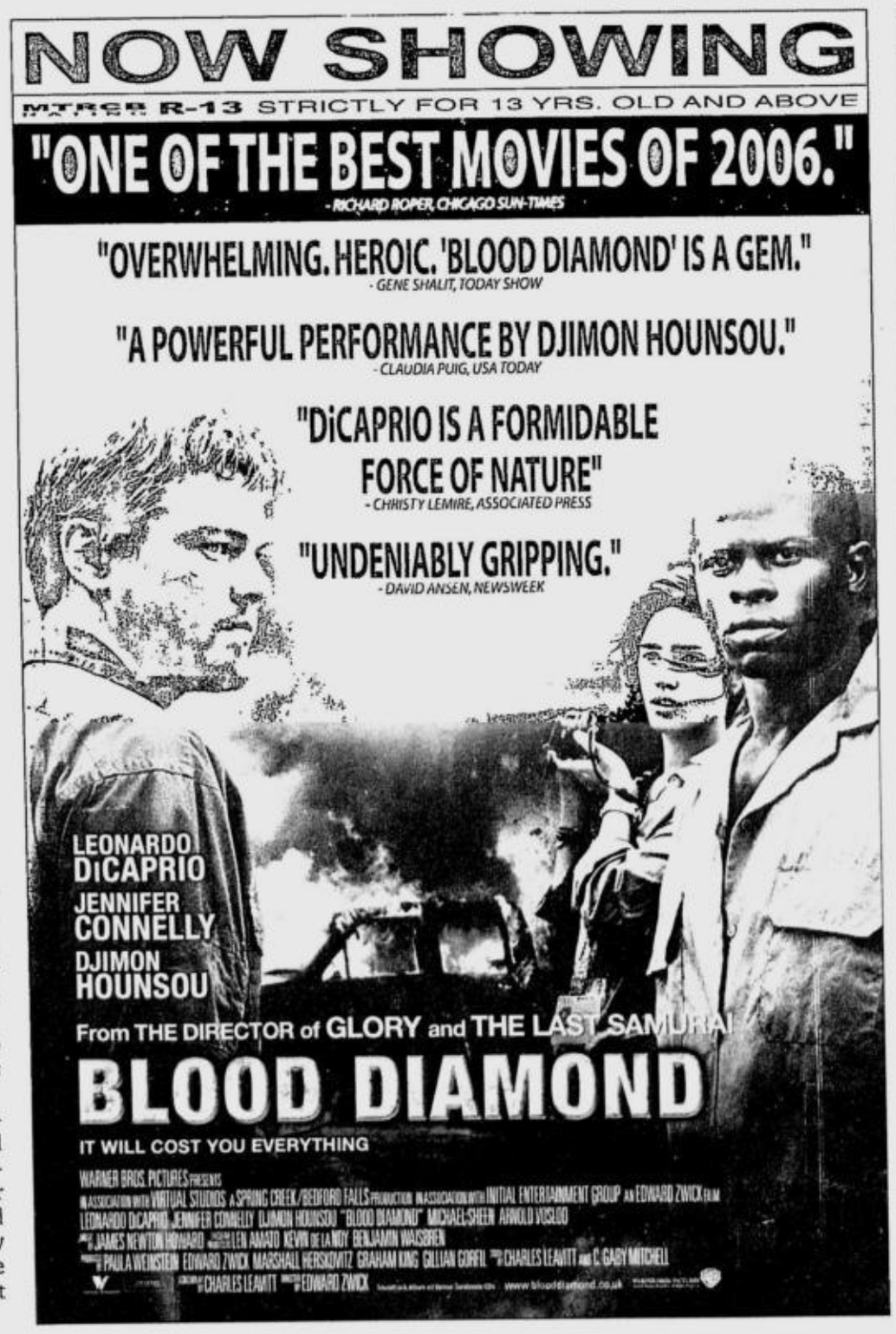
From Ernie (Calldcgo@aol):

Ruben,

Just want to say how proud we Filipinos are to have a Filipino movie writer in Hollywood as good as you are.

Your column is so enjoyable, I am always looking forward to it.

I am a big fan of Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt, two beautiful people who use their celebrity for a good cause. Your interview with Angelina is the best I've read about her yet.



This delicate job of creating stars

From page E1

Unlike its counterpart in other reality talent searches, the Starstruck Council has the power to pull down a contestant's score, Ignacio said. "The outcome is not all dependent on text votes."

In e-mails and fan sites, Ignacio has been cast as the devil. "I'm used to it," he said. "But the thing is, I've never been wrong in my choices."

He had wanted to resign more than once on account of the pressure, he said. "But I still took on the job [this year] and I will do it the best way I know how [though] it's not an easy task."

Even as a director, Ignacio is strict. "I require rehearsals before the actors go on cam," he said. "I insist on professionalism. I send a star home if he or she comes to my set unprepared. [And] since 'Starstruck' is a talent search, it is a training ground. The [finalists] should follow rules and regulations. If they can't do that, they have no place in show biz. They would just be *pasaway* forever."

Readers thrilled about Lino-KC match

From page E1

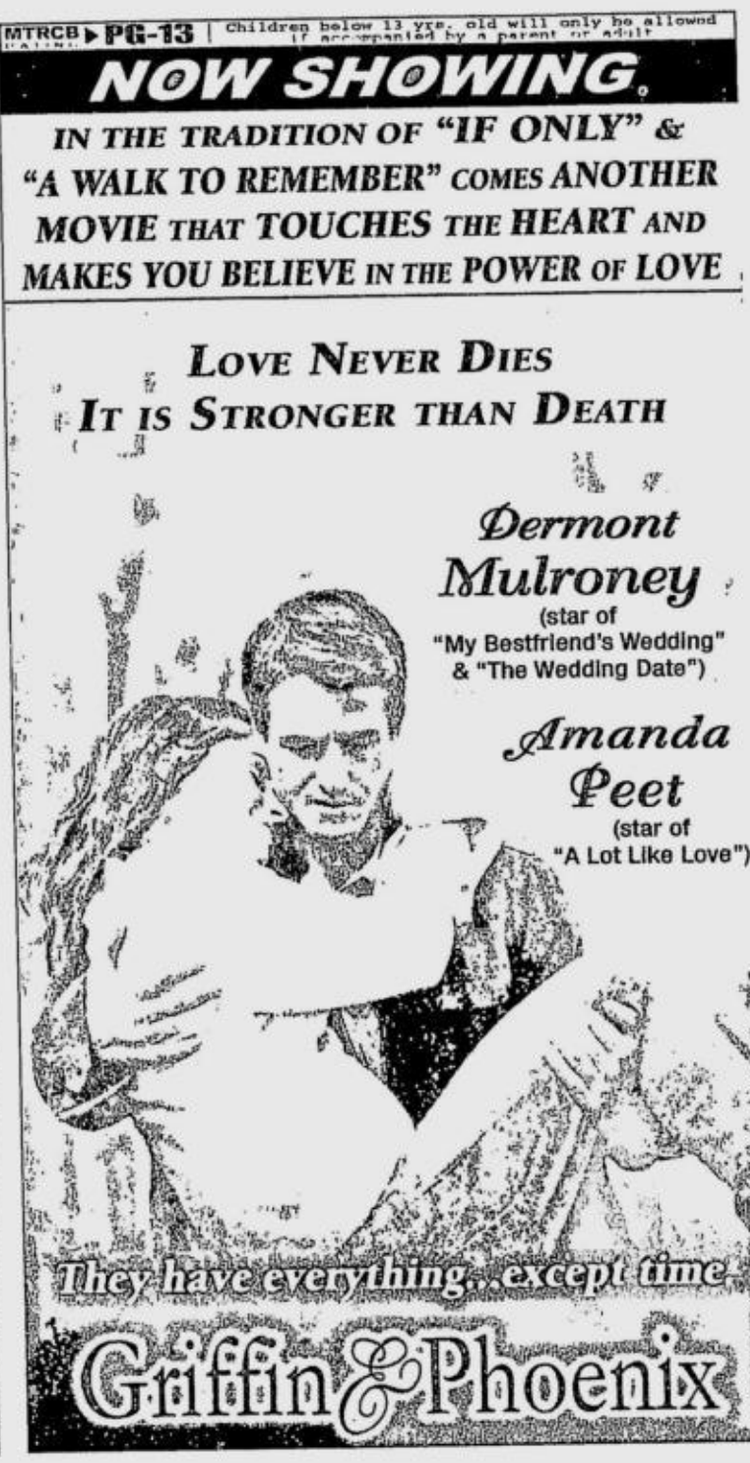
some stars like **Jolina Magdangal**. After bagging the well-deserved Catholic Mass Media Serviam Award for being an icon for the youth, Jolens has signed up with Sundance direct sales as the new endorser for its apparel, shoes and bags line. Her initial catalogue, which is expected to set a new fashion trend a la Jolens, will be out in March. Not all image models are good role models. Jolens is an exception to that.

'Agent X44'

Star Cinema opens 2007 literally with a big bang from the high-powered guns of "Agent X44." It's a side-splitting spoof starring **Vhong Navarro**, dressed in all-white, **Tony Ferrer** style. Tony himself reprises his legendary slippery character in the film. Vhong and Direk **Joyce Bernal** guarantee that it will cost more bellyaches than "D' Anothers" did.

After James Bond's hit "Casino Royale," now it's our local secret agent's turn to shine.

E-mail wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com.



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G4 (GLORIETTA 4)	1 ROB-B-HOOD	2 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO	3 THX BLOOD DIAMOND GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 ERAGON	5 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8	6 ERAGON	7 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
GB1 (GREENBELT 1)	1 BLOOD DIAMOND	2 ERAGON		
GB3 (GREENBELT 3)	1 THX ERAGON GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX BLOOD DIAMOND GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 ERAGON GUARANTEED SEATS	4 ROB-B-HOOD GUARANTEED SEATS	5 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC (ALABANG TOWN CENTER)	1 THX ERAGON GUARANTEED SEATS	2 BLOOD DIAMOND		
	3 ROB-B-HOOD	4 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX	5 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO	
ACC (AYALA CENTER CEBU)	1 ERAGON	2 BLOOD DIAMOND	3 ROB-B-HOOD	4 FEAST
M2 (MARKET! MARKET!)	1 ERAGON	2 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX		
	3 ROB-B-HOOD	4 BLOOD DIAMOND	5 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO	

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"APOCALYPTO"

Coming this year from Fox

IT'S ALL ABOUT dragons at the start of the Year of the Boar as 20th Century Fox opens 2007 with the fantasy adventure film "Eragon."

The movie stars newcomer Ed Speleers in the title role, with solid support from Rachel Weisz (voicing a mythical dragon), John Malkovich, Jeremy Irons and Sienna Guillory

Stiller starrer

More of mythical creatures in "Night at the Museum," Ben Stiller. When the lights go down and the last visitor leaves the museum, all the exhibits come to life—from prehistoric animals to gladiators and cowboys. Also starring Robin Williams and Owen Wilson.

Heart-stopping

From Academy Award-winning filmmaker Mel Gibson comes "Apocalypto," a heart stopping mythic action-adventure set against the turbulent end times of the once great Mayan civilization.

Graphic movie

The graphic movie "The Fountain" has Hugh Jackman playing a modern day scientist desperately trying to find a cure for the cancer that is killing his wife (Rachel Weisz), and also a conquistador on a quest to find the fountain of youth, as well as an astronaut traveling toward a distant future.

Four orphans

From two of the six writers of "Scary Movie" comes "Epic Movie," about four orphans who visit a chocolate factory and are transported to the land of Gnarnia where they battle pirates, wizards and the dastardly White Bitch.

Viking boy

"Pathfinder" is about a Viking boy (Karl Urban) left behind by his people in the enemy grounds. The boy grows up to be a warrior and his true identity is revealed when he wages war against his own people.

Mutants

"Hills Have Eyes 2" finds a group of young National Guard trainees attacked by mutants during a training mission in the New Mexico desert.

Unsettling

Another tense and unsettling thriller, "Turistas" revolves around a group of young travelers stranded in a remote Brazilian beach town with a dark secret.

Rocky's back!

An American cinema icon returns for the last round—"Rocky Balboa," starring ... who else? Sylvester Stallone.

Urgent mission

"Sunshine" is a thriller that follows the transport of extremely dangerous explosives through space on an urgent mission. The movie stars Michelle Yeoh.

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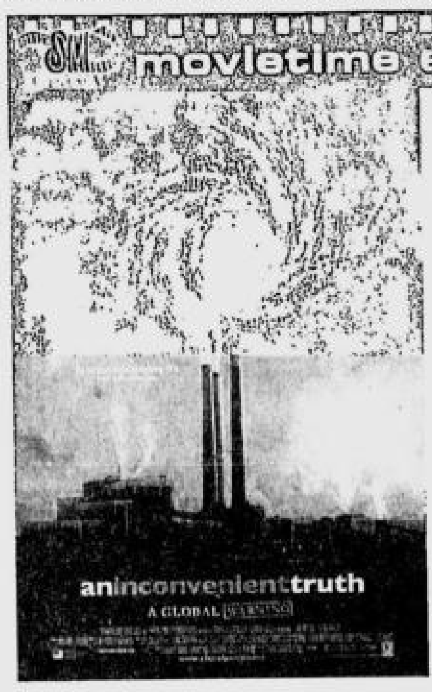

Former US Vice President Al Gore presses a timely issue worth everybody's time: global warming. Gore addresses the issue in his surprisingly funny, engaging, open and downright way with facts and predictions that will eventually convince us to stand and make a difference. "An Inconvenient Truth" lets us re-examine that global warming, more than the usual political agenda, is the biggest challenge of our global civilization

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1:30PM 5:15PM 9:00PM Admission Fee- P200
1 BLOOD DIAMOND
2 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
3 ERAGON
4 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
5 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 3

PREMIERE CINEMA
KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

CENTERSTAGE
ROB-B-HOOD

PODIUM
CINEMA 1
BLOOD DIAMOND
CINEMA 2
ERAGON
633-8976

SM NORTH EDSA 929-5452
1 ERAGON
2 MANO PO 5
3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8
4 BLOOD DIAMOND
5 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
6 ROB-B-HOOD
7 ERAGON
8 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
9 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
10 SUPER NOYPI
11 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
12 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

SM MEGACINEMA 633-1901
1 BLOOD DIAMOND
2 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
3 ERAGON
4 ROB-B-HOOD
5 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8
6 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
7 AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH
8 MANO PO 5
9 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
10 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
11 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
12 LIGALIG

SM CITY FAIRVIEW 935-0749
1 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
2 SUPER NOYPI
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 ERAGON
5 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
7 BLOOD DIAMOND
8 ROB-B-HOOD
9 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
10 ERAGON
11 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
12 MANO PO 5

SM CITY STA. MESA 716-1416
1 ERAGON
2 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
3 BLOOD DIAMOND
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
5 ROB-B-HOOD
6 MANO PO 5
7 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
8 SUPER NOYPI
9 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8
10 LIGALIG

SM CITY SAN LAZARO 786-2488
1 ERAGON
2 BLOOD DIAMOND
3 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
4 ROB-B-HOOD
5 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 3

SM CITY SOUTHMALL 806-6888
1 ERAGON
2 ERAGON
3 ROB-B-HOOD
4 BLOOD DIAMOND
5 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
6 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
7 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
8 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8
9 MANO PO 5

SM CITY BICUTAN 776-3055
1 ERAGON
2 ROB-B-HOOD
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
4 BLOOD DIAMOND

SM CITY MANILA 523-9240
1 BLOOD DIAMOND
2 ROB-B-HOOD
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 ERAGON
5 LIGALIG
6 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
7 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
8 SUPER NOYPI
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10 MANO PO 5
11 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8
12 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

SM CITY DASMARINAS (046)4323201-04
1 ROB-B-HOOD
2 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
4 ERAGON

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1 ERAGON
2 BLOOD DIAMOND
3 ROB-B-HOOD
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

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6 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
7 MANO PO 5
8 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX

SM CITY CLARK (045)625-5844-45
1 ERAGON
2 ROB-B-HOOD
3 BLOOD DIAMOND
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
6 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8

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3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 ROB-B-HOOD

LUZON

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3 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
4 ERAGON

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1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8
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4 BLOOD DIAMOND
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
6 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

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2 ERAGON
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
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1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 ERAGON
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 THE NATIVITY

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1 ERAGON
2 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
3 ROB-B-HOOD
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 3

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2 ROB-B-HOOD
3 ERAGON
4 KASAL, KASALI

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1 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
2 ROB-B-HOOD
3 ERAGON
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 3

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2 ERAGON
3 ROB-B-HOOD
4 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
5 FEAST
6 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8
7 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
8 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

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2 AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
5 ERAGON
6 RESERVED
7 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS
8 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8

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4 FEAST

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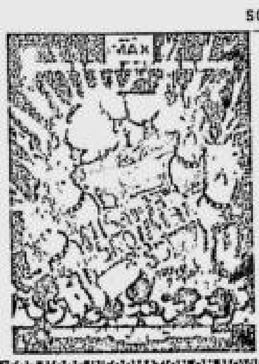

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GALLERIA 632-9116

1 ERAGON • THX	6 ROB-B-HOOD
2 BLOOD DIAMOND	7 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO	8 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
4 GRIFFIN and PHOENIX	9 MANO PO 5
5 ERAGON	10 LIGALIG

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 ERAGON	
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3	5 BLOOD DIAMOND
3 GRIFFIN and PHOENIX	6 ROB-B-HOOD
4 ERAGON	7 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

METRO EAST 682-8193 / 682-8199

1 ERAGON	5 ERAGON
2 BLOOD DIAMOND	6 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
3 ROB-B-HOOD	7 GRIFFIN and PHOENIX
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 3	8 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8

NOVALICHES 935-3231 / 935-3229-30

1 ERAGON	5 KAMASUTRA 3
2 BLOOD DIAMOND	6 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 ROB-B-HOOD	7 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

PIONEER 687-5378

1 ERAGON	3 ROB-B-HOOD
2 BLOOD DIAMOND	4 GRIFFIN and PHOENIX

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STA. ROSA (049) 837-0907
1 ERAGON
2 ROB-B-HOOD
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
5 KAMASUTRA / LIGALIG

LIPA (043) 757-3864 (043) 312-5870
1 ERAGON
2 ROB-B-HOOD
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
5 KAMASUTRA 3

DASMARINAS (046) 852-2125 (046) 416-4332
1 ERAGON
2 KAMASUTRA 3
3 ROB-B-HOOD
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
5 LIGALIG

ANGELES (045) 892-2348
1 ERAGON
2 BLOOD DIAMOND
3 ROB-B-HOOD
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

IMUS (046) 875-3838 (046) 471-6188
1 ERAGON
2 BLOOD DIAMOND
3 ROB-B-HOOD
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
5 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
6 KAMASUTRA 3

STARMILLS (045) 875-1927 (045) 961-5270
1 ERAGON
2 BLOOD DIAMOND
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
5 ERAGON
6 ROB-B-HOOD

BACOLOD (034) 441-0463 (034) 441-0459
1 ERAGON
2 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS
3 THE RETURN
4 ERAGON/SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
5 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 3

ILOILO (033) 338-8070
1 ERAGON
2 KAMASUTRA 3
3 THE RETURN
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
6 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS

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What's up for Vilma Santos this year?

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

STARS' CAREERS ARE MARKED by many false starts and plateaus, and a few, choice defining moments that provide the spikes and spurts that keep them fresh, unique and exciting as celebrities.

In time, show biz luminaries learn to gloss over the false starts and plateaus, and to focus on the defining moments, because they're the career landmarks that really count, and enable them to stand out from the madding stellar crowd.

Take veteran star **Vilma Santos**, her first defining moment came early in her career, when as a new child star, she played the title role in "Trudis Liit" to tearful acclaim.

As an adolescent performer, she languished in relative obscurity until she teamed up with **Edgar Mortiz**. They clicked as a teen love team, and co-starred in scores of movies together.

After the phenomenal **Nora Aunor** revved up her own stellar career, however, Vilma was relegated to second place, and that rankled. To get out of that rut, she reinvented herself as a young-adult and even sexy actress, by way of defining films like "Burlesk Queen."

As an award-winning actress, Vilma's defining starrer was "Dama de Noche," which enabled her to win her first Best Actress trophy. But she *really* established herself as a superlative movie actress with her insightful portrayal of an activist nun in "Sister Stella L."

This past decade, Vilma has continued to keep her show biz career eventful with sterling successes like "Anak."

But her focus on her screen career has been deflected by her new persona as Lipa City's mayor, which has prompted her to cut her movie output back to one starrer every two years or so.

What's up for Vilma in 2007? She definitely needs another defining moment to galvanize that public's interest in her, especially if she decides to give up her career in politics, for various personal reasons. What could that new screen vehicle be? Another **Chito Roño** movie, definitely.

Other veteran stars have similar highlights in their careers, and they provide a handy and telling profile of their growth as entertainers.

But, what about newcomers? They don't have the luxury of time to make up for their own false starts, and the stellar game has turned much more competitive for them of late, with the introduction of the concept of "seasonal" or even "disposable" stars.

These days, so many good-looking young talents are making their respective bids for stardom that some producers now market freshness for freshness' sake!

With very little career-development investment, they launch new young stars in movies or TV shows, get as much short-term mileage out of them, and then promptly junk them in favor of a new batch of even fresher faces next year.

How cynical and utilitarian can you get? Very.

What can young talents do about this dead-end situation? Confound the cynics by turning in exciting performances that can keep the fans interested in them beyond their initial stellar bids.

Then, if they're really lucky, they can go on to create their own periodic defining moments, to keep their careers exciting—hopefully, like Vilma Santos, for many productive decades on end!

Premieres on Nickelodeon

Coming up on Jan. 12: New episodes of "My Life as a Teenage Robot" on "Brand New Fridays" at 7 p.m. And, every Saturday and Sunday at 9 a.m. and 4 p.m., watch "Team Galaxy" and the mind-blowing space adventures of Josh, Yoko and Bret of Galaxy High.

Starting on Jan. 22, TeenNick Block will be extended to two hours daily (from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.). And, on Jan. 26 at 8 p.m., TeenNick launches "Life with Derek," a new show featuring two typical teenagers who unexpectedly become siblings when their parents get married.

SHANG CINEPLEX

1 ERAGON MTRCB GP 1:00, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, 10:00
2 BLOOD DIAMOND MTRCB R-13 12:30, 3:40, 6:50, 10:00
3 ROB-B-HOOD MTRCB PG-13 1:15, 4:00, 6:45, 9:35
4 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX MTRCB PG-13 12:20, 2:45, 5:10, 7:35, 10:00

PREMIERE THEATRE: KASAL, KASALI, KASALO MTRCB PG-13

Movies and schedules are subject to change without prior notice

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BLOOD DIAMOND - R13 2:10,5:10,8:10	GRIFFIN AND PHOENIX - PG13 1:10,3:30,5:50,8:10,10:30	BLOOD DIAMOND - R13 1:30,4:30,7:30,10:30
ERAGON G 12:00,2:20,4:40,7:00,9:20	ROB-B-HOOD - PG13 2:35,3:05,5:35,8:05,10:30	ERAGON - G 1:00,3:20,5:40,8:00,10:20

MOVIES AND SCREENING SCHEDULES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE. FOR VERIFICATION CALL 856-1401

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CINEMA 1 MANO PO 5 11:00, 1:30, 4:00, 6:30, 9:00 GP
CINEMA 2 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL 11:50, 2:50, 5:45, 8:40 PG13
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CINEMA 3 KARMA/DEJAVU 10:45, 12:50, 2:55, 5:00, 7:05, 9:40 PG13
CINEMA 4 ENTENG KABISOTE 10:45, 1:15, 3:40, 6:05, 8:35 GP
CINEMA 5 KASAL KASALI KASALO 11:45, 2:05, 4:20, 6:35, 8:50 PG13
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JAN 06, 2007	Razorback and Wolfgang	8:30 PM
JAN 23, 2007	Marissa Sanchez	8:30 PM
EVERY MONDAY	DANCE NIGHT	7:00PM
Jan. 13, 2007	Rachel Gerodias	8:30 PM
Jan. 16, 23, 30, 2007	Dyords Ko Po	8:30 PM

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1	ROB-B-HOOD 2:25, 5:10, 7:55, 10:40 PG-13
2	BLOOD DIAMOND 1:55, 5:05, 8:15, 11:10 R-13
3	ERAGON 1:00, 3:30, 6:00, 8:30, 11:00 G
4	GRIFFIN & PHOENIX 1:20, 3:45, 6:10, 8:35, 11:00 PG-13

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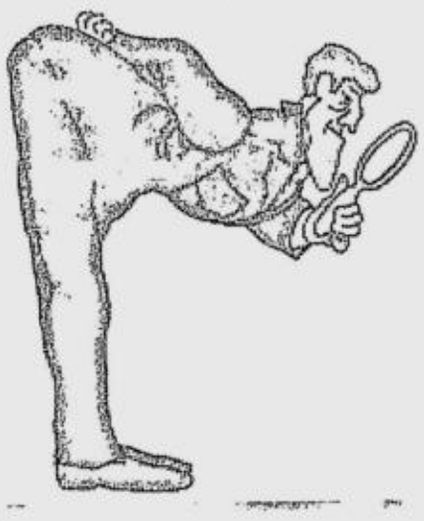

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ERAGON 12:20 / 1:10 / 2:40 / 3:30 / 5:00 / 5:50 / 7:20 / 8:10 / 9:50	ROB-B-HOOD 1:10 / 4:00 / 6:50 / 9:40	THE BLOOD DIAMOND 1:05 / 4:00 / 6:55 / 9:50	THE PLATINUM CINEMA
	HAPPY FEET 1:30 / 4:00 / 6:30 / 9:00	GRIFFIN & PHOENIX 1:45 / 4:20 / 6:55 / 9:30	
KASAL, KASALI, KASALO 1:00 / 3:10 / 5:20 / 7:30 / 9:40	ENTENG KABISOTE 3 1:40 / 4:10 / 6:50 / 9:40	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL 1:10 / 4:00 / 6:50 / 9:40	ERAGON 2:00 / 4:20 / 6:40 / 9:00

MALL 5

ERAGON 12:45 / 3:20 / 5:55 / 8:30	ROB-B-HOOD 12:40 / 3:30 / 5:20 / 8:10	THE BLOOD DIAMOND 12:35 / 2:30 / 5:25 / 8:20
KASAL, KASALI, KASALO 12:35 R3 / 2:05 / 4:15 / 6:25 / 8:35	GRIFFIN & PHOENIX 1:00 / 3:35 / 6:10 / 8:45	DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS

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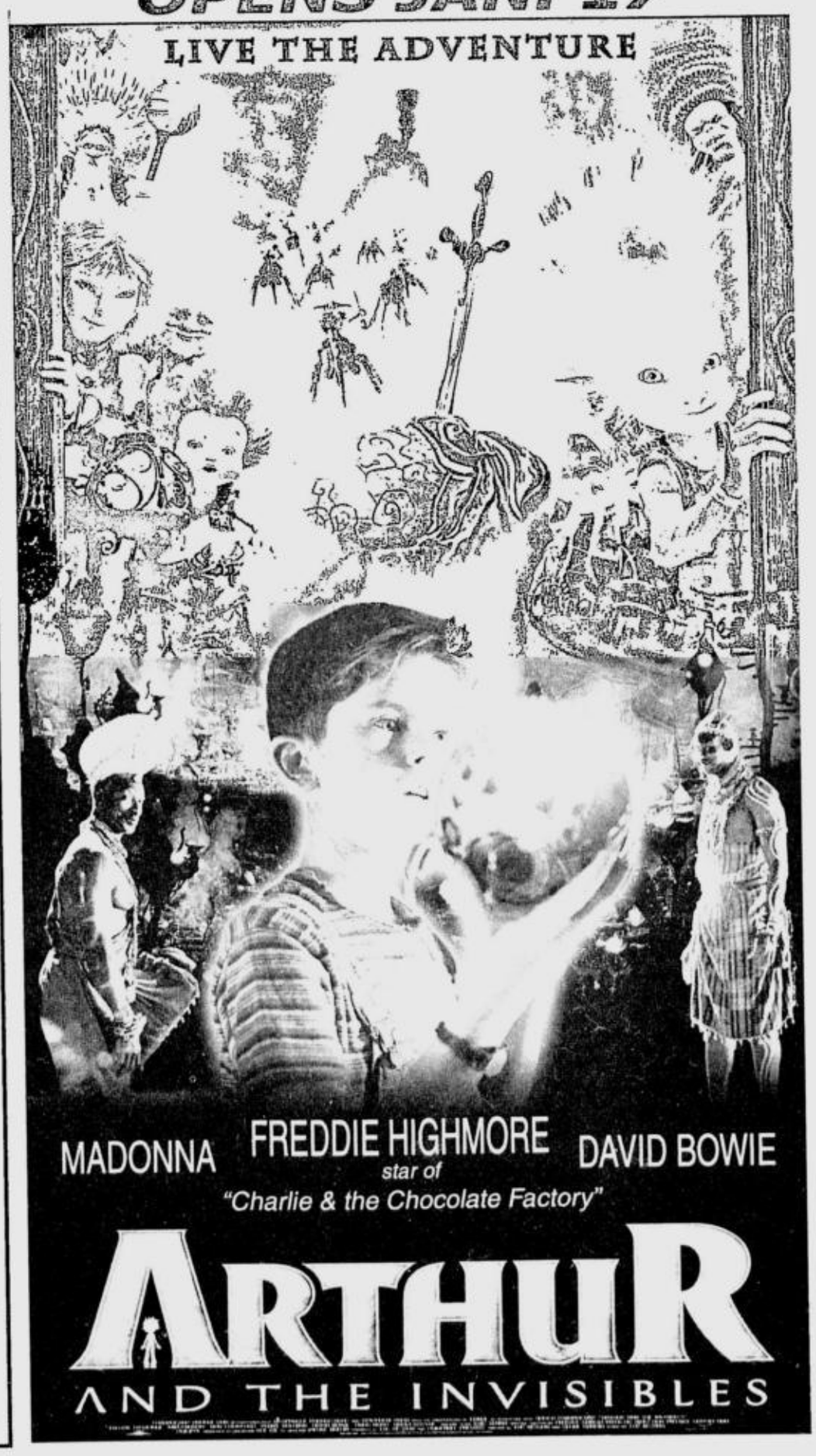
OPENS JAN. 17